

THE LOTUS SUTRA



(Translated by The Buddhist Text Translation Society in USA)

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Thus I have heard.

At one time the Buddha dwelt on Mount Grdhrakuta, near the city of the House of the Kings, together with a gathering of great Bhikshus, twelve thousand in all. All were Arhats who had exhausted all outflows and had no further afflictions. Having attained self-benefit, they had exhausted the bonds of all existence and their hearts had attained self-mastery.

Their names were: Ajnatakaundinya, Mahakashyapa, Uruvilvakashyapa, Gayakashyapa, Nadikashyapa, Shariputra, Maharn Maudgalyayana, Mahakatyayana, Aniruddha, Kapphina, Gavampati, Revata, Pilindavatsa, Vakkula, Mahakaushthila, Nanda, Sundarananda, Purnamaitrayaniputra, Subhuti, Ananda, and Rahula -- and other great Arhats such as these, whom the assembly knew and recognised.

Moreover, there were those with further study and those beyond study, two thousand in all, there was the Bhikshuni Mahaprajapati with her retinue of six thousand, and Rahula's mother, Bhikshuni Yashodhara, also with her retinue.

There were eighty-thousand Bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas, all irreversibly established in Anuttarasamyaksambodhi. All had obtained Dharani and the eloquence of delight in speech and turned the irreversible wheel of the Dharma. They had made offering to limitless hundreds of thousands of Buddhas and in the presence of those Buddhas had planted the roots of virtue. They were constantly receiving those Buddhas' praise. They cultivated themselves in compassion and were well able to enter the wisdom of the Buddhas. They had penetrated the great wisdom and arrived at the other shore. Their reputations extended throughout limitless world realms, and they were able to cross over countless hundreds of thousands of living beings.

Their names were: The Bodhisattva Manjushri, The Bodhisattva Who Contemplates The World's Sounds, The Bodhisattva Who Has Attained Great Might, The Bodhisattva Constant Vigor, The Bodhisattva Unresting, The Bodhisattva Jeweled Palm, The Bodhisattva Medicine King, The Bodhisattva Courageous Giving, The Bodhisattva Full Moon, The Bodhisattva Great Strength, The Bodhisattva Unlimited Strength, The Bodhisattva Who Has Transcended the Three Realms, The Bodhisattva Bhadrakala, The Bodhisattva Maitreya, The Bodhisattva Jewel Accumulation, The Bodhisattva Guiding Master --- and other Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas such as these, eighty thousand in all.

At that time, Shakro Devanan Indrah was present with his retinue of twenty thousand gods. Among them were the God Moon, the God Universal Fragrance, the God Jeweled Light, and the Four Great Heavenly Kings with their retinues, ten thousand gods in all. There was the God Comfort, and the God Great Comfort, with their retinues, thirty thousand gods in all.

There was the God King Brahma, ruler of the Saha World, as well as the great Brahma Shikin and the great Brahma Brilliance, and others, with their retinues, twelve thousand gods in all.

There were eight dragon kings: The Dragon King Nanda, The Dragon King Upananda, The Dragon King Sagara, The Dragon King Vasuki, The Dragon King Takshaka, The Dragon King Anavatapta, The Dragon King Manasvin, and The Dragon King Uptalaka, and others, each with his retinue of several hundreds of thousand followers.

There were four Kinnara kings: The Kinnara King Dharma, The Kinnara King Fine Dharma, The Kinnara King Great Dharma and The Kinnara King Upholder of Dharma, each with his retinue of several hundreds of thousands of followers.

There were four Gandharva kings: The Gandharva King Music, The Gandharva King Musical Sound, The Gandharva King Beautiful, The Gandharva King Beautiful Sound, each with his following of several hundreds of thousands of followers.

There were four Asura kings: The Asura King Kharaskandha, The Asura King Vemachitrin, and the Asura King Rahu, each with his retinue of several hundreds of thousands of followers.

There were four Garuda kings: The Garuda King Great Majesty, The Garuda King Great Body, The Garuda King Great Fullness, and the Garuda King As You Will.

Each with his own retinue of several hundreds of thousands of followers.

There was Vaidehi's son, The King Ajatashatsu, with his retinue of several hundreds of thousands of followers. Each made obeisance to the Buddha's feet, withdrew to one side, and sat down.

At that time the World Honored One, having been circumambulated by the Fourfold Assembly, presented with offerings, honored, venerated, and praised for the sake of the Bodhisattvas, spoke a Great Vehicle Sutra named The Limitless Principles, a Dharma for instructing Bodhisattvas of which the Buddha is protective and mindful.

After the Buddha had spoken this Sutra, he sat in full lotus and entered the Samadhi of the Station of Limitless Principles, body and mind unmoving.

At that time there fell from the heavens a rain of Mandarava Flowers, Mahamandarava Flowers, Manjushaka Flowers, and Mahamanjushaka Flowers, which were scattered upon the Buddha and the entire great assembly.

All the Buddha universes quaked in six ways.

At that time the entire great assembly of Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, Upasikas, Gods, Dragons, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Asuras, Garudas, Kinnaras, Mahoragas, beings

human and non-human, as well as the Minor Kings, The Wheel-Turning Sage Kings, all attained what they had never had before. They rejoiced and joined their palms and, with one heart, gazed upon the Buddha.

Then the Buddha emitted from between his brows a white hair-mark light which illumined eighteen thousand worlds to the east, omitting none of them reaching below to the Avichi hells and above to the Akanishtha heaven. From this world were seen all the living beings in the six destinies in those lands further were seen all the present Buddhas in those lands and all the Sutras and Dharma spoken by the Buddhas was heard.

Also seen were the Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, Upasikas in those lands who cultivated and attained the Way.

Moreover were seen the Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas, the various causes and conditions, the various beliefs and understandings, and the various appearances of their practice of the Bodhisattva Way.

Further were seen the parinirvana of the Buddhas and, after the parinirvana of the Buddhas, the building of stupas with the seven jewels to hold their sharira.

Then the Bodhisattva Maitreya and this thought: "Now, the World Honored One manifests signs of spiritual transformations. What is the reason for these portents? The Buddha, the World Honored One, has now entered Samadhi, yet these are inconceivable and rare events. Who should I ask concerning them? Who could answer?"

He further thought: "The Dharma Prince, Manjushri, has in the past drawn near and made offerings to limitless Buddhas. Surely he has seen such rare signs. I shall now ask him."

Thereupon the Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas, as well as the gods, dragons, ghosts, spirits, and others, all had this thought: Who should now be asked concerning the Buddha's bright light and signs of spiritual penetrations?"

At that time, the Bodhisattva Maitreya, wishing to resolve his own doubts, and further regarding the thoughts of the four-fold assembly of Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas, as well as the thoughts of the assembled gods, dragons, ghosts, and spirits and others, questioned Manjushri as follows:

"What are the reasons for these portents, these signs of spiritual penetrations, for the emanation of great light which illumines eighteen thousand lands to the east so that the adornments in all those Buddha worlds are fully seen?"

Thereupon, Maitreya Bodhisattva, wishing to restate his meaning, spoke verses asking:

*"Manjushri, what is the reason
For the guiding master's emanation
From the white hair between his brows*

*Of a great light which shines everywhere,
and for the rain of Mandaravas
and of Manjushaka flowers,
the breeze of fragrant Chandana which
delights the hearts of those assembled?
Through these causes and conditions,
the earth is all adorned and pure,
and within this world the earth
trembles in six different ways.
Then the four-fold multitude
rejoices altogether;
in body and in mind enraptured,
they obtain what they had never had.*

*The bright light from between the brows
shines into the eastern quarter,
causing eighteen thousand lands
all to become of golden hue.
And from the Avichi hell,
upwards to the peak of being,
within each of the worlds are seen
the beings within the six paths,
their destinies in birth and death,
their karmic conditions, good or evil,
their retributions, favorable or ill--
all of this is seen, herein.*

*Further seen are all the Buddhas,
the lions, the sagely masters,
expounding on the Sutra scriptures,
of foremost subtlety and wonder.
Clear and pure is the sound
of their soft, compliant voices,
teaching all the Bodhisattvas,
numbering in the countless millions.
The Brahma sound, profound and wondrous,
fills those who hear with joy
as, within his world, each one proclaims the proper Dharma.
Through various causes and conditions,
and limitless analogies,
they clarify the Buddhadharma
to enlighten living beings.*

*To those who've encountered suffering,
weary of sickness, aging, death,
they speak about Nirvana,*

*which brings all suffering to an end.
To those possessed of blessings who've
made offerings to past Buddhas and
resolved to seek the superior Dharma
they speak of enlightening to conditions.
To those who are the Buddha's sons,
who cultivate various practices,
seeking wisdom unsurpassed,
they speak of the way of purity.*

*Manjushri, while dwelling here,
I see and hear such things as these,
reaching to a thousand million things;
such a multitude of them
which I shall now explain in brief.*

*I see in other lands
Bodhisattvas like Gange's sands,
through various causes and conditions
seeking the Buddha Way.*

*Perhaps they practice giving,
with gifts of silver, gold, and coral
of true pearls, and of mani,
mother-of-pearl, carnelian,
of vajra and of other gems,
of servants and of carriages,
jeweled hand drawn carts and palanquins.
These they offer up with joy,
in dedication to the Buddha Way,
vowing to obtain the vehicle
foremost in the triple realm,
the one which all the Buddhas praise.
There are Bodhisattvas who
give a jeweled coach -and-four,
with rails and flowered canopies,
richly ornamented carriages.
Again are Bodhisattvas seen
who give their flesh, hand, and feet,
who even give their wives and children,
seeking for the utmost Way.
Again are Bodhisattvas seen
whose heads, eyes, and bodies whole
are offered up most joyfully,
seeking the Buddha's wisdom.*

*Manjushri,
I see royal monarchs who
visiting those Buddhas' courts
ask about the utmost Way,
and then forsake their pleasant lands,
palaces, ministers, concubines,
and, cutting off their beards and hair,
clothe themselves in Dharma robes.*

*Seen are Bodhisattvas who
beoming Bhikshus, dwell alone
within the wilds, in quietude,
reciting Sutra texts with joy.*

*Again are Bodhisattvas seen,
striving with heroic vigor,
entering the mountains deep,
to ponder on the Buddha Way.*

*Seen, too, are those who've left desire,
who dwell in constant solitude,
deeply cultivating Dhyana Samadhi
and attaining five spiritual penetrations.
Again are Bodhisattvas seen
in the peace of Dhyana, with palms joined,
who, with a thousand ten thousand lines,
sing praises of the Dharma kings.*

*Again are Bodhisattvas seen,
of profound wisdom and solid will,
able to question the Buddhas and
accept and hold all they have heard.
Further seen are Buddha's disciples,
with wisdom and Samadhi perfect,
who, with limitless analogies,
preach Dharma to the multitudes.
Joyfully they preach the Dharma,
transforming all the Bodhisattvas,
defeating thus the troops of Mara,
and beating on the Dharma drum.*

*Seen too are Bodhisattvas
in silence and tranquility;
though worshipped by the gods and dragons,
they do not find it cause for joy.
Also seen are Bodhisattvas*

*dwelling in forests, emitting light,
relieving those suffering in the hells,
and leading them to the Buddha Way.*

*Also seen are Buddha's disciples
who have not slept, but walk at ease,
within the forest groves; they seek
with diligence the Buddha Way.*

*Seen too are those with perfect precepts
intact, with awe-inspiring manner,
their purity like precious pearls,
with which they seek the Buddha Way.*

*Also seen are the Buddha's disciples
abiding in the strength of patience;
though by those of overweening pride
maliciously rebuked and beaten,
they are able to endure it all,
seeking for the Buddha Way.*

*Again are Bodhisattvas seen,
apart from all frivolity,
and from stupid followers,
drawing near to those with wisdom.
Singlemindedly casting out confusion,
collecting their thoughts in the mountain forests,
for tens of thousands of millions of years
in quest of the Way of the Buddha.*

*Bodhisattvas there are seen,
who, with fine food and drink and with
a hundred kinds of broths and herbs
make offerings to the Buddha and the Sangha.
Who, with fine robes and superior garments,
of value in the millions,
or with in valuable robes
make offerings to the Buddha and the Sangha.
Who, with a million different kinds
of dwellings of precious sandalwood
and with much fine bedding
make offerings to the Buddha and the Sangha.
Who, with gardens and groves, clear and pure,
with flowers and fruits in abundance
with flowing springs and bathing ponds,
make offerings to the Buddha and the Sangha.*

*Offerings such as these,
of many kinds, extremely fine,
do they give with joy untiring,
seeking for the utmost Way.*

*There are Bodhisattvas who
speak of still extinction's Dharma
with various instructions teaching
living beings without number.
Seen are Bodhisattvas who
contemplate all Dharmas' nature
as lacking the mark of duality,
like empty space.
Also seen are Buddha's disciples
whose minds have no attachments and
who use this wondrous wisdom,
seeking for the utmost Way.*

*Manjushri,
Again are Bodhisattvas who,
after the Buddhas cross into extinction,
make offerings to the Sharira.
Again are seen Buddha's disciples,
building stupas, building temples,
countless as the Ganges sands,
to adorn those realms and lands.
The Jeweled stupas, tall and fine,
are five thousand Yojanas in height,
two thousand Yojanas in breadth.
Each stupa and temple is adorned
with a thousand curtains and banners
circling around and wrought with gems,
and jeweled bells which harmoniously chime.*

*All the gods, dragons, and spirits,
humans and non-humans,
with incense, flowers, and instrumental music,
constantly make offerings.
Manjushri,
All the Buddhas' disciples,
adorn the stupas and the shrines
making offerings to the Shariras;
spontaneously, the realms and lands
are superbly fine and exquisite,
like the king of heavenly trees
when its flowers bloom.*

*The Buddha sends forth this single ray,
and I and those assembled here
view within those realms and lands,
the various special wonders.
The spiritual might of the Buddhas
and their wisdom is most rare,
emitting a single, pure light,
they can illumine limitless lands.
Seeing this, we have all
obtained what we have never had.
Disciple of the Buddha, Manju,
pray resolve the assembly's doubts.*

*The Four-fold multitude with joy
looks up to you, humane one, and to me.
Why has the World Honored One
emitted such a brilliant light?
Disciple of the Buddha, answer now;
resolve our doubts, so we may rejoice.
What benefit is to be gained
by putting forth this brilliant light?
That wondrous Dharma the Buddha gained
as he sat in the field of the Way --
Does he wish, now, to preach it?
or is he going to give predictions?
The manifesting of the Buddha-lands,
adorned with many jewels, and pure,
as well as the vision of the Buddhas
does not betoken small conditions.
Manju, it should be known,
the four assemblies, dragons and spirits,
look to you, humane one, hopefully;
what is it that is to be said?*

At that time, Manjushri addressed the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Maitreya and all the great lords, saying, "Good men, in my estimation, the Buddha, the World Honored One, now wishes to speak the great Dharma, to let fall the great Dharma rain, to blow the great Dharma conch, to beat the great Dharma drum, and to proclaim the great Dharma doctrine."

"Good men, I have, in the past, in the presence of other Buddhas, seen such portents. Having emitted this light, they immediately spoke the great Dharma. Therefore, it should be known that the manifestation of light by the present Buddha is also thus. Because he wishes to lead all living beings to hear and understand this Dharma which in the whole world is hard to believe, he therefore manifests these portents."

"Good men, it is just as in the past, limitless, boundless, inconceivable Asankhyeya aeons ago, there was at that time a Buddha named Brightness of Sun-Moon-Lamp Thus Come One, One Worthy of Offerings, one of Proper and Universal knowledge, One of Perfect Clarity and Conduct, Well-Gone One, an Unsurpassed Knight who Understands the World, a Hero Who Subdues and Tames, a Teacher of Gods and People, the Buddha, the World Honored One who expounded the proper Dharma, good at its beginning, good in its middle, and good at its end, its meaning profound and far-reaching, its words clever and subtle, pure and unadulterated, complete with the marks of pure, white Brahman conduct."

"To those who sought to be Sound-Hearers, he responded with the Dharma of the Four Truths, by which one crosses over birth, aging, sickness, and death to the ultimate Nirvana; to those who sought to be Pratyeka Buddhas, he responded with the Dharma of the Twelve Conditioned Causes; for the sake of the Bodhisattvas, he responded with the Six Paramitas, causing them to attain Anuttarasamyaksambodhi and realize the wisdom of all modes."

"Then, there was another Buddha, also named Brightness of Sun-Moon-Lamp, and then another Buddha, also named Brightness of Sun-Moon-Lamp, and so forth for twenty-thousand Buddhas all of the same name, Brightness of Sun-Moon-Lamp, and also of the same surname, Bharadvaja.

"Maitreya, it should be known that all of those Buddhas, from the first to the last, had the same name, Brightness of Sun-Moon-Lamp, and were complete with the ten titles, and that the Dharma they spoke was good at its beginning, middle, and end."

"Before the last Buddha left the home-life, he had eight royal sons. The first was named Intention, the second, Good Intention, the third, Limitless Intention, the fourth Jeweled Intention, the fifth, Increasing Intention; the sixth, Intention Rid of Doubt, the seventh, Resounding Intention, and the eighth, Dharma Intention. The eight princes were of awesome virtue and self-mastery and each ruled over four continents."

"When the princes heard that their father had left the home-life and attained Anuttarasamyaksambodhi, they all renounced their royal positions and left home as well. They brought forth the resolve for the Great Vehicle and constantly cultivated Brahman conduct. All became Dharma Masters, having already, in the presence of ten million Buddhas, planted the roots of goodness."

"At that time, the Buddha Sun-Moon-Lamp Brightness spoke a Great Vehicle Sutra named The Limitless Principles, a Dharma for instructing Bodhisattvas of which the Buddhas are protective and mindful. When he had finished speaking that Sutra, he then, in the midst of the assembly, sat in full lotus and entered the Samadhi of the Station of Limitless Principles; his body and mind were unmoving. Then from the heavens there fell a rain of Mandarava flowers, Mahamandarava flowers, Manjushaka flowers, and Mahamanjushaka flowers, which were scattered upon the Buddha and the entire great assembly. All the Buddha universes quaked in six ways. At that time the entire great

assembly of Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, Upasikas, gods, dragons, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Asuras, Garudas, Kinnaras, Mahoragas, beings human and non-human as well as the minor kings and the wheel-turning sage kings and so forth, all attained what they had never had before. They rejoiced and joined their palms and, with one heart, gazed upon the Buddha. Then the Thus Come One emitted from between his brows a white hair-mark light which illumined eighteen thousand Buddha-worlds to the east, omitting none of them. Just like all the Buddha lands now seen."

"Maitreya, it should be known that there were at that time in the assembly twenty million Bodhisattvas who took delight in listening to the Dharma. Upon seeing this bright light illumine all the Buddha lands, all the Bodhisattvas obtained what they had never had and wished to know the causes and conditions for this light."

"There was at that time a Bodhisattva by the name of Wondrous Light who had eight hundred disciples. The Buddha Brightness of Sun-Moon-Lamp then arose from Samadhi and, for the sake of the Bodhisattva Wondrous Light, spoke a Great Vehicle Sutra called the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower, a Dharma for instructing Bodhisattvas of which the Buddha is protective and mindful.

"For sixty small aeons he did not rise from his seat. Those assembled listening also sat in one place for sixty small aeons with bodies and minds unmoving, listening to what the Buddha said as if it were but the space of a meal. At that time, in the assembly, there was not a single person who grew weary, either physically or mentally."

"At the end of sixty small aeons, having finished speaking the Sutra, the Buddha Sun-Moon-Lamp Brightness immediately announced to the assembly of Brahma, Mara, Shramanas, Brahmans, gods, humans, and Asuras, 'Today, at midnight, the Thus Come One will enter Nirvana without residue.' There was at that time a Bodhisattva by the name of Virtue Treasury to whom the Buddha Sun-Moon-Lamp Brightness transmitted a prediction, telling all the Bhikshus, 'The Bodhisattva Virtue Treasury will next become a Buddha with the name of Pure-Body-Tathagato rhan, Samyaksambuddhah. After that Buddha had transmitted the prediction, at midnight he entered Nirvana without residue.'"

"Following the Buddha's crossing over into extinction, the Bodhisattva Wondrous Light upheld the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra for a full eighty small aeons, expounding it to others. The eight sons of the Buddha Sun-Moon-Lamp Brightness all served Wondrous Light as their master. Wondrous Light taught and transformed them, causing them to become firmly established in Anuttarasamyaksambodhi."

"The princes, having made offerings to limitless hundreds of thousands of tens of thousands of millions of Buddhas, all realized the Buddha Way. The very last to become a Buddha was one named Burner of the Lamp."

"Among the eight hundred disciples was one named Seeker of Fame, who was greedily attached to profit and offerings. Although he read and recited many scriptures, he did not comprehend them and forgot most of what he learned. For that reason he was called

Seeker of Fame. Because he had also planted good roots, he was able to encounter limitless hundreds of thousands of tens of thousands of millions of Buddhas, making offerings to them and honoring them, venerating and praising them."

"Maitreya, it should be known, could the Bodhisattva Wondrous Light have been anyone else? I, myself, was he. And the Bodhisattva Seeker of Fame was you, yourself!"

"The portents now seen do not differ from those, and so, in my estimation, today the Thus Come One is about to speak a Great Vehicle Sutra called The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower, a Dharma for instructing Bodhisattvas of which the Buddha is protective and mindful."

At that time Manjushri, in the midst of the assembly, wishing to restate his meaning, spoke verses, saying:

*I recall that in ages past,
Limitless, countless aeons ago,
There appeared a Buddha, one honored among people
By the name of Brightness of Sun-Moon-Lamp,
That World Honored One proclaimed the Dharma,
Taking limitless living beings across,
Causing countless millions of Bodhisattvas
To enter the wisdom of the Buddhas.*

*Before that Buddha had left home,
The eight royal sons born to him,
Seeing the Great Sage leave him home,
Also followed him to practice Brahman conduct.*

*The Buddha then spoke a Great Vehicle
Sutra by the name of Limitless Principles;
Amidst the assembly, and for their sake,
He set it forth in extensive detail.
When the Buddha had finished speaking the Sutra,
Seated in the Dharma-seat,
He sat in full lotus and entered the Samadhi
Called the Station of Limitless Principles.
From the heavens fell a rain of Mandarava flowers,
And heavenly drums of themselves did sound,
While all the gods, dragons, ghosts and spirits,
Made offerings to the Honored One;
And, within all the Buddha lands,
There occurred a mighty trembling.
The light emitted from between the Buddha's brows
Manifested all these rare events.*

*The light illumined to the east
Eighteen thousand Buddha lands,
Revealing the places of living beings'
Karmic retributions of birth and death.
Seen, too, were Buddha lands adorned
With a multitude of gems,
The color of lapis lazuli and crystal,
Illumined by the Buddha's light.
Seen as well were gods and people,
Dragons, spirits, and Yaksha Hordes,
Gandharvas and Kinnaras,
Each making offering to the Buddha.*

*Thus come ones, too, all were seen
As they naturally accomplished the Buddha Way,
Their bodies' hue like mountains of gold,
Upright, serene, subtle, and fine,
As, within pure lapis lazuli
Would appear an image of real gold.
The World Honored Ones in those assemblies
Proclaimed the profound principle of the Law.
In all the Buddhas' lands,
Were Shravaka hosts, uncountable;
Through the illumination of the Buddha's light
Those assemblies all were fully seen.
There were also Bhikshus who,
Dwelt within the mountain groves,
Vigorously upholding the pure precepts
As if guarding brilliant pearls.
Also seen were Bodhisattvas
Practicing giving, patience, and so forth,
Their number like the Ganges' sands,
Illumined by the Buddha's light.
Seen too were Bodhisattvas who
Had deeply entered Dhyana Samadhi,
With bodies and minds still and unmoving
They sought the Way unsurpassed.
Bodhisattvas, too, were seen who knew
The Mark of Dharmas' still extinction;
Each one within his Buddhaland
Spoke Dharma, seeking the Buddha's path.*

*Then the four-fold multitudes
Seeing the Buddha Sun-Moon-Lamp
Manifest great and powerful spiritual penetrations,
In their hearts all rejoiced,*

*And inquired, each of the other,
"What is the reason for these events?"*

*The Honored One, revered by gods and humans,
Just then from Samadhi did arise,
And praised the Bodhisattva Wondrous Light:
"You act as eyes for the world,
All return to you in faith; you are
Able reverently to hold the Dharma-store.
Dharma such as I do speak--
You alone can certify to its understanding."
The World Honored One having praised him,
And caused Wondrous Light to rejoice,
Then spoke the Sutra of the Dharma Flower.*

*For a full sixty minor aeons
He did not rise from his seat.
The supreme and wondrous Dharma that he spoke,
The Dharma Master Wondrous Light
Was fully able to receive and hold.*

*The Buddha, having spoken The Dharma Flower,
And caused the assembly to rejoice,
Later, on that very day,
Announced to the host of gods and humans;
"The meaning of the real mark of all Dharmas
Has already been spoken for all of you,
And now at midnight, I
shall enter into Nirvana.
You should single-heartedly advance with vigor,
And avoid laxness, for
Buddhas are difficult indeed to meet,
Encountered but once in a million aeons."*

*All of the disciples of the World Honored One
Hearing of the Buddha's entry into Nirvana,
Each harbored grief and anguish,
"Why must the Buddha take extinction so soon?"
The sagely Lord, the Dharma King,
Then comforted the limitless multitude:
"After my passage into extinction,
None of you should worry or fear,
For the Bodhisattva Virtue Treasury,
With respect to the non-outflow mark of reality,
In heart has penetrated it totally;
He will next become a Buddha,*

*By the name of Pure Body, and
Will also save uncounted multitudes.*

*That night the Buddha passed into extinction,
As a flame dies once its fuel has been consumed.
The Sharira were divided up,
And limitless stupas built.
The Bhikshus and Bhikshunis,
Their number like the Gange's sands,
Redoubled their vigor in advancing
In their quest for the unsurpassed path.*

*The Dharma Master Wondrous Light
Reverently kept the store of the Buddha's Law;
For eighty minor aeons, he
Widely spread the Sutra of the Dharma Flower.
All of the eight royal sons
Taught and led by Wondrous Light,
Became solid in the unsurpassed path,
And met with Buddhas beyond all count.
Having presented them offerings,
They accordingly practiced the Great Way,
And in succession, became Buddhas,
Transmitting prophecies in turn.
The last of these, a god among gods,
Was a Buddha by the name of Burner of the Lamp,
A guiding master of all the immortals,
Who brought release to countless multitudes.
The Dharma Master Wondrous Light
Had a disciple at that time
Whose heart harbored laxness, and who
Was greedily attached to fame and gain.
Seeking fame and gain untiringly,
He often visited the great clans;
He cast aside his recitations
Neglected, forgot, and failed to comprehend them.
These, then, were the reasons why
He was given the name "Seeker of Fame."
Yet he also practiced many good deeds,
Enabling him to meet uncounted Buddhas,
And make offerings to all of them.
Accordingly he walked the great path,
And perfected the Six Paramitas.
Now he meets the Shakyan Lion;
Later, He will become a Buddha
By the name of Maitreya,*

*Who will broadly take all beings over--
Their number far beyond all count.*

*After that Buddha had passed into extinction,
the indolent one was you,
And the Dharma Master Wondrous Light,
Was I, myself, now present here.*

*I saw the Buddha Brightness of Lamp;
His light and portents were like these.
Thus I know the present Buddha,
Wishes to speak The Dharma Flower Sutra.*

*The present marks are like the portents past,
Expedient devices of the Buddhas.
The Buddha now puts forth bright light,
To help reveal the real mark's meaning.
All of you now should understand, and
With one heart, join your palms, and wait;
The Buddha will let fall the Dharma rain,
To satisfy all those who seek the Way.*

*Those who seek three vehicles,
Should they have doubts or regrets,
The Buddha will remove them now,
So that they vanish and none remain.*

CHAPTER TWO

EXPEDIENT DEVICES

At that time the World Honored One arose serenely from Samadhi and told Shariputra, "The wisdom of all the Buddhas is extremely profound and unlimited. The gateway to this wisdom is difficult to understand and difficult to enter. It cannot be known by any of the Sound Hearers or Pratyeka Buddhas.

"What is the reason? The Buddhas have, in the past, drawn near to countless hundreds of thousands of tens of thousands of millions of Buddhas, exhaustively practicing the unlimited Dharmas of the Way of those Buddhas. They are forging ahead with courage and vigor and their names are known everywhere.

"They have accomplished the most profound Dharma, one which has never been before, and speak of it according to what is appropriate, but its purport is difficult to understand."

"Shariputra, from the time I realized Buddhahood, I have, by means of various causes and conditions and various analogies, extensively proclaimed the verbal teaching. With countless expedient devices, I have guided living beings, leading them to separate from all attachments.

"Why is this? The Thus Come One has already perfected his expedient devices and his knowledge and vision.

"Shariputra, the knowledge and vision of the Thus Come One is vast, great, profound, and far-reaching. He has profoundly entered, without boundary, the unlimiteds, the unobstructeds, the powers, the fearlessnesses, the Dhyana concentrations, and the Samadhis of liberation, accomplishing all those Dharmas never had before."

"Shariputra, the Thus Come One is able to make various discriminations, cleverly speaking all Dharmas. His speech is gentle and delights the hearts of the multitudes.

"Shariputra, essentially speaking, the Buddha has fully accomplished all of those unlimited, boundless Dharmas which have never been before."

"Stop."

"Shariputra, there is no need to speak further. Why is this? As to that foremost, rare, and hard-to-understand Dharma accomplished by the Buddha--only the Buddhas and the Buddha can exhaust the Real Mark of all Dharmas, that is to say, with regard to all Dharmas: the suchness of the marks, the suchness of the nature, the suchness of the substance, the suchness of the power, the suchness of the function, the suchness of the causes, the suchness of the conditions, the suchness of the effects, and suchness of the retributions, and the suchness of the ultimate equality from beginning to end."

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses saying,

*Illimitable are the heroes of the world.
All the gods and people in the world,
And all the classes of living beings
Cannot know the Buddhas.
The Buddhas' powers, fearlessnesses,
Liberations and Samadhis,
And other Dharmas of the Buddhas
Can be fathomed by no one.
Formerly, following countless Buddhas,
I perfectly walked all the paths
Of the wonderful Dharma, subtle and deep,
Hard to see and hard to understand;
Through limitless millions of aeons.
I walked down all these paths.*

*In the Bodhimanda, I realized the fruit,
And have fully known and seen it all.
The great effect and retribution,
The various natures, marks, and meanings,
Are such that I and the ten-direction Buddhas*

*Alone can understand these matters.
This Dharma can't be demonstrated,
The mark of language being still and extinct;
Of all the kinds of living beings
None there is who can understand it.
Except the host of Bodhisattvas,
Firm in the power of faith.
The host of the Buddha's disciples
Who've made offerings to the Buddhas
And who have exhausted all outflows,
And dwell in their final bodies--
The strength of people such as these
Also proves inadequate.
If the world were filled
With those like Shariputra,
Who together spent their thoughts to measure it,
They couldn't fathom the Buddha's wisdom.*

*Truly, suppose the ten directions,
Were filled with those like Shariputra,
And that the remaining disciples filled
All the lands in the ten directions,
And that together they spent their thoughts to measure it,
They also could not know it.
If Pratyeka Buddhas of sharp wisdom
Without outflows, in their final bodies,
Also filled the ten-directions,
Their number like the bamboo in the forest,
And if they put their minds together,
Wishing to think about the Buddha's real wisdom,
Throughout measureless millions aeons,
They could not know the smallest part of it.
Suppose newly resolved Bodhisattvas,
Who've made offerings to countless Buddhas,
Who understand the principle and the purport,
And are well able to speak the Dharma,
Whose numbers are like rice, hemp, bamboo, and reeds,
Filled the ten-direction lands,
And suppose with one mind and with wondrous wisdom,
They were all together to think it over,*

*Throughout aeons like the Ganges' sands,
Even they couldn't know the Buddha's wisdom.*

*Suppose that non-retreating Bodhisattvas,
Their number like the Ganges' sands,
With one mind thought to seek that wisdom
They also could not know of it.
And what is more, Shariputra,
That inconceivable, non-outflow,
Most profound and subtle Dharma,
I have perfectly obtained,
And I alone know its mark,
Along with the ten-direction Buddhas.
Shariputra, you should know
The words of the Buddhas do not differ.
In the Dharma spoken by the Buddhas
You should place the power of great faith.
When the World Honored One's Dharma's at its end,
The true and real must be spoken.
I tell the assembly of Sound Hearers
And those who seek the Conditioned Enlightened Vehicle,
That I will lead them to cast off suffering's bond,
And arrive at Nirvana.
The Buddha uses the power of expedients,
Demonstrating the teaching of Three Vehicles,
So that living beings, attached in many places,
May be guided to escape.*

At that time in the assembly there were Sound Hearers, Arhats with outflows extinguished, Ajnatakaundinya and others, twelve hundred persons, as well as Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas who had brought forth the resolve to become Sound Hearers and Pratyeka Buddhas. They all had the following thought:

"Why, now, does the World Honored One repeatedly praise the expedient devices saying, 'The Dharma obtained by the Buddha is so extremely profound and difficult to understand and the purport of his speech is so difficult to know, that none of the Sound Hearers or Pratyeka Buddhas can grasp it.' The Buddha has spoken of but one principle of liberation and we have already obtained this Dharma and arrived at Nirvana. Now, we do not understand his intention."

At that time Shariputra, knowing the doubts in the minds of the four-fold assembly, and himself not yet fully understanding, addressed the Buddha saying, "For what reason has the World Honored One repeatedly praised the foremost expedient devices of the Buddhas and the extremely profound and wonderful Dharma which is difficult to understand? From the past onwards I have never heard the Buddha speak in such a way. Presently, the four-fold assembly all has doubts. I only pray that the World Honored One

will expound upon this subject: Why has the World Honored One repeatedly praised the Dharma which is extremely profound, subtle, and hard to understand?"

At that time, Shariputra, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses saying,

*O, Sun of Wisdom, Great Honored Sage,
Long have you waited to speak this Dharma;*

*Speaking of your attainments of such
Powers, fearlessnesses, and Samadhis,
Dhyana Samadhis and liberations,
And other inconceivable Dharmas.*

*Concerning the Dharma attained in the Bodhimanda,
No one is able to raise a question.
I find its meaning hard to fathom,
And am also unable to ask about it.
So you speak unasked,
Praising the path you have walked
And that wisdom fine and subtle,
Attained by all the Buddhas.
All the Arhats, without outflows,
And those who seek Nirvana,
Have fallen into a net of doubts.
"Why has the Buddha said this?"
Those who seek Condition Englightenment,
The Bhikshus, the Bhikshunis,
Gods, dragons, ghosts, and spirits,
Gandharvas and others,
Look at one another, perplexed,
And then gaze at the Doubly Complete Honored One.
"What is the meaning of this matter?"
"We pray that the Buddha will explain."*

*Of the host of Sound Hearers
The Buddha has declared me foremost,
And yet now with my own wisdom
I cannot resolve my doubts.
Is this Dharma ultimate?
Or is it the path to be walked?
Disciples born from the Buddha's mouth,
With joined palms wait, expectantly.
Pray put forth the subtle sound,
For it's time to tell it as it really is.
The gods, dragons, spirits, and others
Their numbers like the Ganges' sands,*

*Bodhisattvas seeking Buddhahood,
Numbering a full eighty thousand,
And, from myriads of millions of lands,
Wheel-Turning Sage Kings have come,
With joined palms and reverent minds
All wish to hear of the perfect way.*

At that time the Buddha told Shariputra, "Stop! Stop! There is no need to speak further. If this matter were spoken of, the gods and humans in all the worlds would be frightened and led to doubt."

Shariputra again addressed the Buddha saying, "World Honored One, I only pray that you will speak it. I only pray that you will speak it. What is the reason? In this assembly are countless hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of Asankhyeyas of living beings who have, in the past, seen the Buddhas. Their roots are keen and their wisdom bright. Hearing what the Buddha says they will be able to revere and believe it."

At that time, Shariputra, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke the following verses:

*Dharma King, Supremely Honored One,
Do but speak; pray have no worries,
For, within the limitless multitudes,
Are those who can revere and believe it.*

The Buddha again stopped Shariputra, "If this matter were spoken of, the gods, humans, and Asuras in all the worlds would be frightened and led to doubt, and those Bhikshus of overweening pride would fall into a bid pit."

The the World Honored One restated his meaning in verse, saying,

*Stop, stop. It must not be spoken.
My Dharma is wonderful beyond conception,
And those of undue pride who heard it,
Surely would neighter revere or believe it.*

At that time, Shariputra further addressed the Buddha, saying, "World Honored One, I only pray that you will speak it; I only pray that you will speak it. Presently, within this assembly are those who are my equal, hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of them. Life after life they have been transformed by the Buddha. People such as these will surely be able to revere and believe you. They will gain security and great benefit within the long night."

At that time, Shariputra, wishing to restate his meaning, recited the following verses:

*Supreme and Doubly Honored One.
Pray speak the foremost Dharma.*

*I, the Buddha's eldest disciple,
Wish you will but speak it in detail.
The limitless host here assembled,
Can revere and believe this Dharma,
For the Buddha has, for life after life,
Taught and transformed such ones as these.
With one mind, with palms joined,
We all wish to hear the Buddha speak.
Twelve hundred of us there are,
And more, seeking Buddhahood.
Pray, for those assembled here,
Speak of it in detail;
Having heard this Dharma,
Great will our rejoicing be.*

Thereupon the World Honored One told Shariputra, "Since you have earnestly requested three times, how can I not speak? You should now listen attentively, think upon it well, and be mindful of it; I will explain it in detail for your sake."

As he said these words, five thousand Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas in the assembly rose from their seats, made obeisance to the Buddha and left. What was the reason? The roots of their offenses were deep and grave and they were of such overweening pride that they claimed to have obtained what they had not yet obtained and to have certified to that to which they had not yet certified to. With faults such as these they could not stay. The World Honored One remained silent and did not restrain them.

The Buddha then told Shariputra, "My assembly has now been cleared of its branches and leaves and only the trunks remain. Shariputra, it is excellent that those of overweening pride have left. You should now listen well and I shall speak it for you."

Shariputra said, "So be it, World Honored One. I wish joyfully to hear it."

The Buddha told Shariputra, "A wonderful Dharma such as this is spoken only occasionally by the Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, just as the Udumbara flower appears but once in a great while.

"Shariputra, you should all believe that which the Buddha says, for his words, are not vain or false. Shariputra, all the Buddhas speak the Dharma in accord with what is appropriate, but its purport is difficult to understand. What is the reason? I extensively speak all Dharmas by means of countless expedient devices, various causes and conditions, analogies, and expressions. This Dharma cannot be understood through deliberation or discrimination. Only the Buddhas alone can know it. Why is this? All the Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, appear in the world only because of the causes and conditions of the one great matter.

"Shariputra, what is meant by 'All Buddhas, World Honored Ones, appear in the world only because of the causes and conditions of the one great matter? The Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, appear in the world because they wish to lead living beings to open the knowledge and vision of the Buddhas and gain purity. They appear in the world because they wish to demonstrate to all living beings the knowledge and vision of the Buddhas. They appear in the world because they wish to lead living beings to awaken to the knowledge and vision of the Buddhas. They appear in the world because they wish to lead living beings to enter into the Path of the knowledge and vision of the Buddhas.

"Shariputra, these are the causes and conditions of the one great matter for which all the Buddhas appear in the world."

The Buddha told Shariputra, "All the Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, teach and transform only Bodhisattvas. All their actions are always for the one matter, and that is only to demonstrate and enlighten living beings to the Buddha's knowledge and vision. Ones use only the Buddha-Vehicle. There are no other vehicles, whether two or three. Shariputra, the Dharma of all the Buddhas of the ten directions is thus.

Shariputra, the Buddhas of the past, by means of limitless, countless expedient devices, various causes Dharmas to living beings. These Dharmas were all for the sake of the One Buddha Vehicle. All these living beings, hearing the Dharma from the Buddhas, ultimately attain the Wisdom of All Modes.

"Shariputra, when the Buddhas of the future shall come into the world, they will also by means of limitless, countless expedient devices, various causes and conditions, analogies and expressions, proclaim all the Dharmas to living beings. These Dharmas will all be for the sake of the One Buddha Vehicle. Hearing the Dharma from the Buddhas, all these living beings will ultimately attain to the Wisdom of all Modes.

"Shariputra, presently, all the Buddhas, World Honored Ones, throughout the ten directions in limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of Buddhalands, greatly benefit living beings and bring them peace and happiness. These Buddhas also by means of limitless, countless expedient devices, various causes and conditions, analogies, and expressions, extensively proclaim all the dharmas to living beings. These Dharmas are all for the sake of the One Buddha-Vehicle. All these living beings, hearing the Dharma from the Buddhas, ultimately attain the Wisdom of All Modes.

"Shariputra, all the Buddhas only teach and transform Bodhisattvas because they wish to demonstrate to living beings the Buddha's knowledge and vision, because they wish to awaken living beings to the Buddha's knowledge and vision, and because they wish to lead living beings to enter the Buddha's knowledge and vision."

"Shariputra, I, now, too am also like this. Knowing that living beings have various desires to which their hearts are deeply attached, according to their basic dispositions, and by means of various causes and conditions, analogies, expressions, and the power of expedient devices, I speak the Dharma to them."

"Shariputra, this is all done so that they may attain the One Buddha Vehicle and the Wisdom of All Modes.

"Shariputra, in the worlds of the ten directions, there are not even two vehicles, how much the less three. Shariputra, all Buddhas appear in the world of the five evil turbidities, that is, the kalpa turbidity, the affliction turbidity, the living beings turbidity, the view turbidity, and the life turbidity. So it is, Shariputra, that in the time of the confusion of the kalpa turbidity, living beings are heavy-laden with impurities; because they are stingy, greedy, envious, and jealous, they develop unwholesome roots. For this reason, all the Buddhas, by means of the power of expedient devices, within the One Buddha Vehicle, make discriminations and speak of three.

"Shariputra, if a disciple of mine calls himself an Arhat or Pratyeka Buddha, but does not hear or know of the fact that all the Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, only teach and transform the Bodhisattvas, he is not a disciple of the Buddha, nor is he an Arhat, nor is he a Pratyeka Buddha."

"Furthermore, Shariputra, it should be known that those Bhikshus and Bhikshunis who claim to have attained Arhatship and to dwell in their final bodies before ultimate Nirvana, but who do not further resolve to seek Anuttarasamyaksambodhi, are people of overweening pride. Why is this? It is impossible that any Bhikshu who had actually attained Arhatship should not believe this Dharma, except in the case when the Buddha has passed into extinction and no Buddha is in existence. Why is this? After the Buddha has passed into extinction, those who accept, uphold, read, recite, and understand the meaning of Sutras such as this will be hard to find. If they encounter other Buddhas, they will then obtain thorough understanding of this Dharma.

"Shariputra, all of you should, with one heart, believe, understand, accept and uphold the speech of the Buddha, for in the words of all the Buddhas there is nothing vain or false. There are no other vehicles; there is only the One Buddha Vehicle."

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate his meaning, spoke verses, saying,

*Those Bhikshus and Bhikshunis,
Who harbor overweening pride,
The arrogant Upasakas,
Upasikas who don't believe,
In the four-fold host, such ones as these.
Numbering five thousand strong.*

*Who do not see their own mistakes,
Deficient in morality,
And guarding imperfections,
Those of paltry wisdom have left;*

*The chaff within the multitude is gone,
Thanks to the Buddha's awesome virtue.*

*These people, lacking blessings and virtue,
Are unworthy of receiving this Dharma.
The assembly is free of branches and leaves;
The trunks alone remain intact.
Shariputra, listen well:
The Dharma obtained by the Buddhas,
Is spoken for living beings
Through the power of limitless expedients.
The thoughts in living being's minds,
The various pathways they have walked,
The nature of their various desires,
Their karma, good or ill, from former lives,
The Buddha knows them all thoroughly.
Using conditions, analogies,
Expressions, and powerful expedients,
I cause them to rejoice.
I may speak the Sutras,
Gathas, or past events,
Of former lives, the unprecedented,
Causes and conditions,
Analogies or geyas,
Or the upadesha texts.
To dull-rooted ones who delight in lesser Dharmas,
And who are greedily attached to birth and death,
Who, under limitless Buddhas,
Have not walked the deep and wondrous Path,
Oppressed by scores of sufferings,
For them I speak of Nirvana.
I have established these expedients
To cause them to enter the Buddha's wisdom.
Never did I say, "All of you
Will realize the Buddha Way."
I did not say as much because
The time to speak had not yet come.
The time, now, is exactly right,
To speak the Great Vehicle.
The nine divisions of my Dharma,
Are spoken to accord with living beings;
Intending to lead them into the Great Vehicle,
I therefore speak this Sutra text.
For the Buddha's disciples, pure in heart,
Who are complaint and have been faculties,
Who, under countless Buddhas,*

*Have walked the deep and wondrous Path,
I speak the Sutra of the Great Vehicle.
I predict that such people
In the future will realize the Buddha Way,
For with profound thoughts they recollect the Buddha,
Cultivate and uphold pure morality.
When they hear that they will become Buddhas
Great will their rejoicing be.
The Buddha knows their thoughts and conduct,
And speaks the Great Vehicle for them.
If Sound Hearers or Bodhisattvas,
Hear this Dharma that I speak,
Be it but a single verse,
They will become Buddhas, without a doubt.*

*In the Buddhahands of the ten directions,
There is only the Dharma of One Vehicle;
There are not two or three,
Except those spoken by the Buddhas as expedients,
And those are but false appellations
Used to induce living beings,
So that he may teach them the Buddha's wisdom.
The Buddhas appear in the world
Only for the sake of this One Real Matter;
The other two are not the truth;
To the end they would not use the small vehicle
To rescue living beings.
The Buddha himself dwells in the Great Vehicle,
And in accord with the Dharmas he's gained,
Adorned with the power of Samadhi and wisdom,
He uses these to save living beings,
Having certified to the supreme path, myself,
The Great Vehicle's Dharma of equality,
Were I to teach my means of the small vehicle,
Even a single human being,
I would have fallen into stingy greed;
But such a thing could never be.*

*Should people rely, in faith, upon the Buddha,
The Thus Come One will not deceive them;
He has no thoughts of envy or greed,
And he has cut off all the evil in the Dharmas.
Therefore, throughout the ten directions,
The Buddha alone has nothing to fear.
My body adorned with marks,
I brilliantly illumine the world.*

*Revered by countless multitudes
I speak the Seal of the Real Mark.
Shariputra, you should know,
That in the past I took a vow,
Wishing to lead the multitudes,
To be identical with me.
That vow, made long ago,
Now has been perfectly fulfilled,
For I have transformed all beings,
Leading them into the Buddha Path."*

*If, when I met with living beings,
I taught them just the Buddha Path,
Those lacking wisdom would be puzzled;
Confused, they would not accept the teaching.*

*I know that these living beings
Have never cultivated good roots.
They are firmly attached to the five desires,
And, out of stupidity and love, become afflicted.
Because of all their desires,
They fall into the three evil paths,
They turn on the wheel in the six destinies,
Suffering utter misery.
They take a tiny form in the womb;
Life after life, it continues to grow.
With scanty virtue and few blessings,
They are oppressed by scores of sufferings,
They enter the dense forest of deviant views,
Those of existence, non-existence, and the like.
They become dependent on those views--
Sixty-two of them in all.
Deeply attached to illusory Dharmas,
They cling to them firmly and cannot let them go.
Arrogant, they brag of their loftiness;
They are flatterers, their hearts insincere.
Throughout ten billion aeons,
They never hear the Buddha's name,
Nor do they hear the proper Dharma.
Such people are difficult to save.*

*Therefore, Shariputra,
I set forth expedients for them,
Speak of the way to suffering's end,
And demonstrate Nirvana.
Although I speak of Nirvana,*

*It is not true extinction.
All Dharmas from their origin,
Are ever marked by still extinction.
When the Buddha's disciples have walked the Path,
In a future age they will become Buddhas.
I possess the power of expedients,
And demonstrate the Dharma of Three Vehicles.
All the World Honored Ones,
Speak the Dharma of One Vehicle.
Now all of you assembled here,
Should cast your doubts aside.
The speech of all Buddhas is the same:
There is only One Vehicle, not two.*

*Throughout countless aeons in the past,
Innumerable extinct Buddhas,
Hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of them,
A number beyond all calculation,
World Honored Ones such as these,
Used various conditions, analogies,
And the power of countless expedients,
To proclaim the marks of all Dharmas.
All of those World Honored Ones,
Spoke the Dharma of One Vehicle,
Transforming beings without limit,
Leading them to the Buddha Path.*

*Further, all Great Sagely Lords,
Know the deep desires in the hearts
Of all the gods, humans, and other beings
Within all the worlds.
Using different expedients,
Which help to reveal the foremost principle.
If there are living beings
Who have met with Buddhas in the past
Heard the Dharma, practiced giving,
Morality, patience, and vigor
Dhyana Samadhi, wisdom, and so on,
Cultivating blessings and wisdom,
Persons such as these
Have all realized the Buddha path.*

*When those Buddhas have become extinct
If there are those with compliant hearts,
Beings such as these
Have attained the Buddha Way.*

*After the extinction of those Buddhas,
Those who have made offerings to their Sharira,
Building millions of kinds of stupas,
Made of gold, silver, or of crystal,
Mother-of-pearl, carnelian,
Rose quartz, lapis lazuli, and other gems,
Clear, pure and most ornate,
Worked to grace the stupas,
Or should there be those who've built temples
Out of stone, chandana, or aloeswood,
Hovenia, or other timbers,
Bricks, clay, and the like,
Or those who, in the barren wastes,
Have piled up earth into a Buddha-shrine,
Or even children who, at play,
Have piled up sand to make a stupa,
All persons such as these,
Have realized the Buddha Way.*

*Those who, for the Buddhas,
Have erected images,
Carving all their myriads of marks,
Have realized the Buddha Way.
They may have used the seven gems,
Or bronze or copper, white or red,
Wax, lead, or tin,
Iron, wood, or clay,
Or, perhaps, lacquered cloth,
In making Buddha images;
Persons such as these
Have realized the Buddha Way.*

*Those who painted bright Buddha images,
Adorned with the marks of their hundreds of blessings,
Whether they did it themselves or employed others,
Have realized the Buddha Way.
Even children who, at play,
Who with a straw, a stick, or pen,
Or even with their fingernails,
Drew images of the Buddha,
People such as these,
Gradually accumulated merit and virtue,
Perfecting the heart of great compassion,
And have realized the Buddha Way.
They teach only Bodhisattvas,
And rescue countless multitudes.*

*Should persons, in stupas or in temples,
Make offerings with a reverent heart,
To jewelled or painted images,
With flowers, incense, banners, or canopies,
Or should they cause others to make music,
with drums, horns, or conches,
Pan-pipes, flutes, lutes or bamboo lyres,
Guitars, cymbals, or brass gongs,
With many wondrous sounds as these,
Played solely as offerings.*

*Or if, with happy hearts, with songs
And chants they praised the Buddha's virtues,
With even just one small sound,
They have realized the Buddha Way.
If people with scattered minds
Have given but a single flower
As an offering to a painted image,
They shall gradually see numberless Buddhas.
If they bowed in worship,
Or merely placed their palms together,
Or even raised a single hand,
Or gave a slight nod of the head,
As an offering to the images,
They shall gradually see countless Buddhas,
And have, themselves, realized the Buddha Way.
They will rescue countless multitudes,
And enter Nirvana without residue,
As a fire goes out when the fuel has been consumed.*

*If people with scattered minds,
Enter stupas or temples,
And say but once, "Namo Buddha."
They have realized the Buddha Way.*

*Be it from Buddhas of the past,
While existent, or after their extinction,
Those who have heard this Dharma,
Have realized the Buddha Way.
The World Honored Ones of the future,
Are limitless in number;
All of these Thus Come Ones,
Will also speak the Dharma of expedient devices.
All of the Thus Come Ones,
By means of limitless expedients,
Help all living beings*

*To enter the Buddha's non-outflow wisdom.
Of those who have heard the Dharma,
None will fail to become Buddhas.*

*All the Buddhas have made this vow
"As to the Buddha Way which I have walked,
I wish to lead all living beings
Alike to obtain this Path."
And although the Buddhas of the future
Will speak a hundred thousand million,
Countless Dharma doors,
They are, in fact, for the sake of the Vehicle,
All Buddhas, Doubly Perfect Honored Ones,
Know the Dharmas are eternally without a nature.
The Buddha seed arises from conditions;
Thus they speak of the One Vehicle.
This Dharma abides in the Dharma's position,
Dwelling forever in worldly marks.
Having understood this in the Bodhimanda,
The Guiding Master teaches it expediently.*

*Those who receive the offerings of gods and humans,
The Buddhas of the present in the ten directions,
Their number like the Ganges' sands,
Manifest within the world
To bring peace and comfort to living beings,
And also speak Dharma such as this.
Knowing the foremost still extinction,
They use the power of expedients
To demonstrate the various paths,
In reality, for the sake of the Buddha Vehicle.
Knowing the conduct of living beings,
The thoughts deep within their minds,
Their habitual actions in the past,
The nature of their desire, the power of their vigor,
and their faculties, keen or dull,
They employ various causes and conditions,
Analogies and verbal expressions,
To teach them the appropriate expedients.*

*Now I, too, am like them.
Using various Dharma doors,
I proclaim the Buddha Way
To bring peace and comfort to living beings.
I use the power of my wisdom,
To know the nature of beings' desires;*

*I speak all Dharmas expediently,
To lead them all to happiness.
Shariputra, you should know,
As I regard them with my Buddha eye,
I see living beings in the six paths,
Impoverished, lacking blessings and wisdom,
Entering the dangerous path of birth and death,
Where they suffer unremittingly.
They are deeply attached to the five desires,
Like a yak caring for its tail,
They smother themselves with greed and love,
Blind, and in darkness, seeing nothing.
They do not seek the mighty Buddha,
Or the Dharma which cuts off suffering,
But instead they deeply enter into deviant views;
With suffering, they wish to cast off suffering.
For the sake of these beings,
I give rise to the Great Compassion Heart.*

*When first I sat in the Bodhimanda,
In contemplation, or walking about the tree,
For a full three times seven days,
I thought over matters such as these:
The wisdom which I have obtained,
Is subtle, wonderful, and foremost,
But living beings are dull-rooted,
Attached to pleasure, blinded by delusion;
Beings such as these,
How can they possibly be saved?
Just then the Brahma Heaven Kings,
As well as the God Shakra,
The Four World-Protecting God Kings,
The god of the heaven of Great Comfort,
And the other heavenly multitudes,
With retinues numbering in the billions
Reverently placed their palms together,
And requested me to turn the Dharma Wheel.
I then thought to myself,
"Were I to praise only the Buddha Vehicle,
Beings sunk in suffering
Would be unable to believe this Dharma.
They would slander it out of disbelief,
And fall into the three evil paths.
It's better that I do not speak the Dharma,
But quickly enter into Nirvana."*

*Then I recalled that the Buddhas of the past
Practiced powerful expedients,
And as I now have obtained the Path,
When I had been thinking thus,
The Buddhas of the ten directions all appeared,
And with the Brahma sound encouraged me, saying,
"Good indeed, O Shakyamuni,
Foremost Guiding Master.
Having attained the supreme Dharma,
You follow the precedent of all Buddhas,
To employ the power of expedient devices.
We have all obtained as well,
That foremost Dharma, most wonderful.
For the various kinds of living beings,
We discriminate and teach Three Vehicles.
Those of little wisdom who delight in lesser Dharmas,
Would not believe that they could become Buddhas.
That is why we use expedient means,
To discriminate and teach the various fruits.
Although Three Vehicles are taught.
It is only for the sake of teaching Bodhisattvas.*

*Shariputra, you should know,
That when I heard the Sagely Lions'
Deep, pure, and wondrous sound,
I called out "Homage to all Buddhas."
And further had this thought,
"I have come into a turbid, evil world;
As the Buddhas speak,
I should follow in accord."
Having thought upon this matter,
I went straightway to Varanasi.
Since the still and extinct mark of all Dharmas,
Cannot be expressed in words,
I used the power of expedients,
To instruct the five Bhikshus.*

*This was called the turning of the Dharma wheel.
Then came the sound of Nirvana,
As well as "Arhatship,"
"Dharma," and the "Sangha," various names.
From remote aeons onward,
I have praised and shown Nirvana's Dharma,
As the final end of birth and death's sufferings;
Always have I spoken thus.
Shariputra, you should know,*

*I see disciples of the Buddha,
Resolutely seeking the Buddha Way,
Limitless thousands of myriads of millions of them,
All with hearts of reverence,
All coming before the Buddha.
They had heard, from former Buddhas,
Expedient teachings of the Dharma.
This causes me to think,
"The reason why the Thus Come One appears,
Is to teach the wisdom of the Buddha,
And now the time is exactly right."
Shariputra, you should know,
Those with dull faculties and slight wisdom,
Those attached to marks, the arrogant,
Cannot believe this Dharma.
I now rejoice and have no fear,
And among the Bodhisattvas,
I shall cast expedients aside,
To speak only of the supreme Path.
When the Bodhisattvas have heard this Dharma,
The network of their doubts will be rent;
Twelve hundred Arhats
Will all attain to Buddhahood.*

*As the Buddhas of the three periods of time
In such a manner spoke the Dharma,
So do I likewise now expound
The undiscriminated Dharma.
All Buddhas come into the world
But rarely, and are hard to meet;
And when they appear in the world,
It's hard for them to speak the Dharma.
Throughout countless ages, too,
It's difficult to hear this Dharma.
And those who can hear this Dharma--
Such people too, are rare,
Like the udumbara flower,
In which all take delight,
Which the gods and humans prize,
For it blooms but once in a long, long time.
So one who hears this Dharma, gives joyful praise,
With even just a single word,
Has thereby made offerings,
To all the Buddhas of the three periods of time.
Such people are extremely rare.
Rarer than the udumbara flower.*

*All of you should have no doubts,
For I am the Dharma King;
I declare to the assembly:
I use only the path of One Vehicle,
To teach and transform Bodhisattvas.
There are no Sound Hearer Disciples.
Shariputra, all of you,
the Sound Hearers and Bodhisattvas,
Should know that this wondrous Dharma
Is the secret essence of all Buddhas.*

*In the evil world of five turbidities,
Beings who are blissfully attached
To pleasures and desires,
Wil never seek the Buddha Way.
Evil people of the future,
Hearing the Buddha speak of One Vehicle,
In their delusion will not accept or believe it,
But will slander it and fall into the evil paths.
Still, those with shame and purity,
Who resolutely seek the Buddha Way,
For such ones as these I praise
The path of One Vehicle, extensively.*

*Shariputra, you should know,
The Dharma of all Buddhas is like this:
By means of millions of expedients,
I speak Dharma in accord with what's appropriate.
But those who do not study it,
Will never come to understand it.
Since all of you already know
All Buddhas, Masters of the World,
Work by means of appropriate expedients,
You should have no further doubts.
Let your hearts be filled with joy;
You know you will reach Buddhahood.*

CHAPTER THREE

A PARABLE

Thereupon, Shariputra, with joyful enthusiasm, rose, joined his palms together, and gazed reverently at the honored one's face and said to the Buddha, "Now, having heard this sound of Dharma from the World Honored One, my heart rejoices and I have obtained what I never had before."

"What is the reason? In the past, I heard a Dharma such as this from the Buddha, and saw the Bodhisattvas receive predictions of Buddhahood, but we had no part in this matter. I was deeply hurt that I had lost the limitless knowledge and vision of the Thus Come One.

"World Honored One, when I used to dwell alone in mountain forests at the foot of trees, whether sitting or walking I continually had this thought: 'We all identically enter into the Dharma nature. Why has The Thus Come One shown us deliverance by means of the Small Vehicle Dharma? It is our fault, not the World Honored One's.'

"What is the reason? If we had waited for the lecture on the cause of realizing Anuttarasamyaksambodhi, we should certainly have been delivered by means of the Great Vehicle. But we did not understand that expedient devices were spoken in accord with what was appropriate. Therefore, when we first heard the BuddhaDharma, upon encountering it we immediately believed and accepted it, considered it, and took certification.

"World Honored One, from of old I have, day and night, continually reproached myself. Now, from the Buddha, I have heard what I never heard before, this Dharma which has never been before, and all my doubts have been severed. My body and mind are blissful and I am at peace.

"Today, indeed, I know that I am a true disciple of the Buddha, born from the Buddha's mouth, transformed from the Dharma; I have obtained a share of the Buddhadharma."

At that time Shariputra, wishing to restate his meaning, spoke verses, saying:

*Hearing this Dharma sound,
I gain what I never had;
My heart is filled with great joy,
The net of doubts has been cast aside.*

*From the old, favored with the Buddha's teaching,
I had never lost the greater vehicle.
The Buddha's sound is extremely rare,
And can rid beings of their woes.
I've already attained to the end of outflows,
Yet hearing it my woes also are dispelled.*

*As I dwelt in the mountain valleys,
Sometimes at the foot of trees,
Whether sitting or walking,
I constantly thought upon this topic:
"Ah," I cried in bitter self-reproach,
"Why have I deceived myself?
We, too, are the Buddha's disciples,
And equally enter the non-outflow Dharma;*

*Yet in the future we shall not be able
To proclaim the unsurpassed path.
The golden color, the Thirty-Two,
The Ten Powers and all the liberations,
Are together in a single Dharma,
But I have not obtained these things.
The Eighty Wondrous Excellences,
The Eighteen Unshared Dharmas,
Such qualities of virtue,
I have missed them, every one.
When I used to walk alone
I would see the Buddha in the Great Assembly,
His fame filling the ten directions,
Vastly benefitting all beings.
I felt I'd lost this benefit,
And had but cheated myself.
Constantly, both day and night,
I thought upon this matter,
And wished to ask the World Honored One
Whether or not I had lost it.
I often saw the World Honored One
Praising all the Bodhisattvas,
And so it was, by day and night,
I pondered on matters such as these.
Now I hear the Buddha's sound,
Opportunely speaking that Dharma
Which is without outflows--
Hard to conceive of--
And leads living beings to the Bodhimanda.
Once I was attached to deviant views,
And was a teacher of the Brahmins.
The World Honored One knew my heart,
Pulled out the deviant, taught me Nirvana.
I rid myself of deviant views,
Certified to the Dharma of emptiness,
Then I said to myself
That I'd arrived at extinction.*

*But now at last I realize
It is not real extinction,
For when I become a Buddha,
Complete with Thirty-two Marks,
Revered by gods, humans, and Yaksha Hordes,
Dragons, spirits, and others,
Only then will I be able to say,
"This is eternal extinction, without residue."*

*The Buddha, in the Great Assembly,
Has said I shall become a Buddha.
Hearing such a Dharma sound,
All my doubts have been dispelled.*

*When I first heard the Buddha speak,
My heart was filled with great fear.
Is this not Mara disguised as the Buddha,
Come to disturb and confuse my heart?*

*The Buddha, by means of various conditions,
Analogies, and ingenious speech,
Makes one's heart calm as the sea.
Hearing him the net of my doubts was rent.
The Buddha says that in the past
The limitless Buddhas, now extinct,
Dwelt calmly in expedients,
And also spoke this Dharma--each of them.
The Buddhas of the present and the future,
Their numbers without limit,
Also used expedients,
To proclaim the Dharma such as this,
Just as now the World Honored One
From birth until his leaving home,
His attaining the Way and turning the Dharma Wheel,
Also spoke by means of expedients.
The World Honored One speaks the real path.
The evil one does no such thing;
Hence I now for certain
This is not the demon posing as a Buddha.
Because I had fallen into a net of doubts,
I said it was the doings of a demon.
Hearing the Buddha's complaint voice,
Profound, far-reaching, subtle and fine,
Proclaiming wide the clear, pure Dharma,
Great is the joy within my heart.
My doubts are forever ended,
As in real wisdom I stand firm.*

*I am certain to become a Buddha,
Revered by gods and humans.
I shall turn the unsurpassed wheel of Dharma,
To teach and transform the Bodhisattvas.*

At that time the Buddha told Shariputra, "I, now, amidst the great assembly of gods, humans, Shramanas, Brahmins, and others, declare that in the distant past, in the presence

of twenty thousand millions of Buddhas, for the sake of the unsurpassed path, I have constantly taught and transformed you. And you, throughout the long night, have followed me and received my instruction. I have used expedient devices to guide you to be born within my Dharma.

"Shariputra, in the past I taught you to resolve yourself on the Buddha path, but you have completely forgotten this, and so you say of yourself that you have already attained extinction.

"Now, again, wishing you to recall the path you have practiced according to your past vows, I, for the sake of the Sound Hearers, speak this Great Vehicle Sutra by the name of *The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower*, a Dharma for instructing Bodhisattvas of whom the Buddhas are protective and mindful.

"Shariputra, in a future age, after limitless, boundless, inconceivable aeons, having made offerings to some thousands of myriads of millions of Buddhas, having reverently upheld the proper Dharma, and having perfected the path practiced by the Bodhisattvas, you shall become a Buddha by the name of Flower-Light Thus Come One, One Worthy of Offerings, of Proper and Universal Knowledge, One Whose Understanding and Conduct Are Complete, a Well-gone One Who Understands the World, an Unsurpassed Lord, a Taming and Regulating Hero, a Buddha, a World Honored One.

"His country shall be called 'Apart From Filth.' Its ground will be level, pure, and adorned, tranquil and prosperous, and abounding with gods. It shall have lapis lazuli for soil and eight intersecting roads bordered with golden cords and by which shall stand rows of trees made of the seven jewels constantly blooming and bearing fruit.

"The Thus Come One Flower Light will also teach and transform living beings by means of the Three Vehicles. Shariputra, when this Buddha comes into the world, although it will not be an evil age, because of his past vows, he shall teach the Dharma of the Three Vehicles.

"That aeon will be called 'Adorned with Great Jewels.' Why will it be called 'Adorned with Great Jewels?' Because in that land, Bodhisattvas will be considered Great Jewels."

"These Bodhisattvas will be limitless, boundless, inconceivable in number, beyond the reach of calculation or analogy. With the exception of the power of the Buddha's wisdom, no one shall be able to know their number.

"When they wish to walk, jeweled flowers will spring up beneath their feet. These Bodhisattvas will not be those who have just brought forth their thoughts. They will have planted the roots of virtue for a long time, and in the presence of limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of Buddhas purely cultivated Brahman conduct, constantly receiving the Buddha's praise. Constantly cultivating the Buddha's wisdom and complete with great spiritual penetrations, they will be well-versed in all the doors of Dharma,

straight-forward, ingenuous, and strong-willed, Bodhisattvas such as these will fill that country.

"Shariputra, the lifespan of the Buddha Flower Light will be twelve small aeons, not counting the time during which, as a prince, he will not yet have become a Buddha. The lifespan of the people in that country will be eight small aeons.

"After twelve small aeons, the Thus Come One Flower Light will confer upon the Bodhisattva Solid Fullness a prediction of Anuttarasamyaksambodhi, and announce to the Bhikshus, 'The Bodhisattva Solid Fullness shall next become a Buddha by the name of Flowery Feet Peacefully Walking, Tathagata, Arhat, Samyaksambuddha. His Buddha country will be of like character."

"Shariputra, when the Buddha Flower Light has passed into extinction, the proper Dharma shall dwell in the world for thirty-two small aeons. The resemblance Dharma shall dwell in the world also for thirty-two small aeons."

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses saying,

*Shariputra, in a future age,
There shall be a Buddha, honored and all-wise,
By the name of Flower Light,
Who will save limitless multitudes.*

*Having made offerings to countless Buddhas,
And perfected the Bodhisattva conduct,
The Ten Powers and other meritorious qualities,
He shall certify to the unsurpassed path.*

*When limitless aeons shall have passed,
There shall be an aeon named "Adorned with Great Jewels."*

*And a world by the name of "Apart From Filth,
Being pure and without flaw,
With lapis lazuli as its ground,
And its roads bordered with golden cords,
With multicolored trees made of seven jewels,
Which constantly bloom and bear fruit.*

*The Bodhisattvas in that land,
Will be always firm in mindfulness,
With spiritual penetrations and Paramitas,
All thoroughly perfected.
In the presence of countless Buddhas,
They will have well-learned the Bodhisattva path.*

*Great lords such as these
Shall have been transformed by the Buddha Flower Light.
That Buddha, when still a prince,
Shall renounce his land and worldly glory,
And, in his final body,
Leave home to realize the Buddha path.
The Buddha Flower Light shall dwell in the world
For a lifespan of twelve small aeons.
The people of his land
Shall live for eight small aeons.*

*When that Buddha has become extinct,
The proper Dharma shall remain in the world
For thirty-two small aeons,
Widely saying living beings.
When the proper Dharma's all extinct,
The resemblance Dharma shall remain for thirty-two.
The Sharira shall be distributed widely,
For the offerings of gods and humans.*

*The deeds of the Buddha Flower Light,
Shall be such as these.
That sagely honored one, twice complete,
Shall be supreme and beyond compare.
And he is just you, yourself!
So it's fitting that you do rejoice.*

At that time, the four-fold assembly of Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, Upasikas, as well as the great multitude of Yakshas, Gandharvas, Asuras, Garudas, Kinnaras, Mahoragas, and so forth, seeing Shariputra, in the presence of the Buddha, receive a prediction for Anuttarasamyaksambodhi, greatly rejoiced in their hearts and leapt for unbounded joy.

Each removed his upper garment and presented it as an offering to the Buddha. Shakro Devanam Indrah and the Brahma Heaven king, together with countless gods, also made offerings to the Buddha of heavenly wonderful garments, heavenly Mandarava flowers and Mahamandarava flowers, and so forth.

The heavenly garments they tossed aloft remained in empty space and whirled around. Then all at once in empty space a hundred thousand myriads of kinds of heavenly music began to play, and there fell a rain of heavenly flowers.

As they uttered these words, "Long ago in Varanashi, the Buddha first turned the wheel of the Dharma. Now, he turns again that unsurpassed, magnificent Dharma Wheel."

At that time all the gods, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses saying,

*Long ago in Varanashi,
You turned the Dharma Wheel of Four Noble Truths,
Discriminatingly speaking of the Dharmas,
The production and extinction of Five Heaps.
Now again you turn that wondrous,
Unsurpassed, great wheel of Dharma,
This Dharma's deep and recondite,
And few are those who can believe it.*

*We, from of old,
Have often heard the World Honored One speak,
But never have we heard such Dharma,
So deep, so wondrous, and supreme.
The World Honored One has spoken the Dharma,
And we rejoice accordingly,
As the great wise Shariputra
Now receives the Honored One's prediction.
We, too, are like this,
And will surely become Buddhas,
Throughout all the worlds,
Most honored and supreme.
The Buddha's path is inconceivable,
Taught expediently according to what is fitting.
May all of our blessed Karma,
In this life and in lives gone by,
And the merit and virtue gained from seeing the Buddhas,
Be dedicated to the Buddha path.*

At that time, Shariputra spoke to the Buddha saying, "World Honored One, I now have no further doubts or regrets, having received from the Buddha a prediction for Anuttarasamyaksambodhi. But the twelve hundred whose hearts have attained self-mastery, and who formerly dwelt in the stage of study, were constantly taught by the Buddha who said, 'My Dharma can enable one to separate from birth, old age, sickness, and death and attain ultimate Nirvana.' Both those who study and those beyond study alike have separated from the view of a self, the views of existence and non-existence, and so forth, and claim that they have attained Nirvana. Yet now, hearing from the World Honored One that which they have never heard before, they have all fallen into doubt and delusion. Good indeed, World Honored One, I beg that you would, for the sake of the four-fold assembly, speak of these causes and conditions, to free them of their doubts and regrets."

At that time the Buddha told Shariputra, "have I not said before that all the Buddhas, World Honored Ones, speak the Dharma by means of various causes and conditions, parables, and phrases, and expedient devices, all for the sake of Anuttarasamyaksambodhi? All of these teachings are for the sake of transforming the Bodhisattvas. However, Shariputra, I shall now again make use of a parable in order to

further clarify the principle, for all those who are wise gain understanding through parables.

"Shariputra, suppose that in a country, a city, or a village, there is a great elder, aged and worn, of limitless wealth, possessing many fields, houses, and servants.

"His house is spacious and large, having only one door, but with a great many people--one hundred, two hundred, even five hundred of them--dwelling within it.

"Its halls and chambers are decaying and old; its walls are crumbling. The pillars are rotting at their bases; the beams and ridge-poles are toppling dangerously.

"All at once, throughout the house, a fire breaks out, setting the house ablaze.

"The elder's sons, ten, twenty, even thirty of them are inside the house.

"The elder, seeing the fire arise from the four sides, is greatly alarmed and makes the following reflection: 'Although I have been able to escape safely through this burning doorway, all my children remain inside the burning house, happily attached to their amusements, unaware, unknowing, not alarmed and not afraid. The fire presses upon them and the pain will sear them, but at heart they do not mind it, nor have they any thought to escape.'

"Shariputra, the elder then reflects, 'I have a strong body and arms. I might gather them in a cloth pouch or on a table and take them from the house.' He further reflects, 'This house has only one door and it is narrow and small. My sons are young and immature and as yet know nothing. Attached to their place of play, they may fall and be burnt in the fire. I must tell them of this frightful matter, that the house has caught fire, and they must hurry and come out so as not to be burned.' So thinking, he speaks to his sons, saying, 'Come out, all of you, quickly!' Although the father, in his pity, induces them with good words, still all the sons are happily attached to their amusements and play and refuse to believe him. They are not frightened or afraid and have not the slightest intention of leaving. What is more, they don't know what is meant by 'fire,' what is meant by 'house' or what is meant by 'being lost.' They merely run from east to west in play, staring at their father.

"Then the elder has this thought, 'The house is already ablaze with a great fire. If my sons and I do not get out in time we certainly shall be burned. I shall now devise an expedient device so that my sons can avoid this disaster.'

"The father, knowing both the predispositions of his sons and the preferences each has for various precious toys and unusual playthings to which they happily responded, speaks to them saying, 'The things you will love to play with are rare and hard to get. If you do not take them you will certainly regret it later. Things such as these: a variety of sheep carts, deer carts, and ox carts, are now outside the door for you to play with. All of you should quickly come out of this burning house and I shall give you whatever you want.'

"Then the children, hearing their father speak of these precious playthings which suited their wishes exactly, eagerly push and shove one another aside in a mad scramble, all fighting to get out of the burning house.

"At that time, the elder, seeing that all his sons have gotten out safely and are seated on the ground at the crossroads, is without further obstruction; his mind is at peace and he is filled with joy.

"Then the children all speak to their father saying, 'Father, the fine playthings you promised us a while ago, the sheep carts, the deer carts, and the ox carts, please give them to us now.'

"O Shariputra, at that time the elder gives to all of his sons equally a great cart.

"The cart is high and wide, adorned with a multitude of intertwining jewels, surrounded by railings, and hung with bells on its four sides. Further, it is covered with canopies, adorned with various rare and precious jewels, strung with jeweled cords and hung with flowered tassels. The cart is heaped with beautiful mats and set about with rosy cushions. It is yoked to an ox, plump and white and of fine appearance, of great muscular strength, who walks with even tread, as fleet as the wind, having also many servants who follow and guard it.

"And why is this? That great elder has limitless wealth and all manner of storehouses full to overflowing.

"So he reflects thus: 'My possessions are boundless. I should not give my children small or inferior carts. All of these youngsters are my children whom I love without partiality. Having such great carts made of the seven jewels, infinite in number, I should give them to each one equally. Why? If I gave them to an entire country, they would not run short; how much the less if I gave them to my children!

"Meanwhile, all of the children are riding around on the great carts, having got what they never expected to have, beyond their original hopes.

"Shariputra, what do you think? When that elder gives equally to all of his children the great jeweled carriages, is the guilty of falsehood or not?"

Shariputra replied, "No, World Honored One. The elder is not guilty of falsehood, for he has only enabled his children to avoid the calamity of fire, and has thereby saved their lives. Why is this? In saving their lives he has already given them a fine plaything. How much the more so his setting up of expedients to save them from the burning house.

"World Honored One, if that elder had not given them even so much as a single small cart, he still would not have been speaking falsely. Why? Because the elder previously had this thought, 'I shall use expedients to lead my children out.' For this reason he is not

guilty of falsehood. He is even less guilty since, knowing his own wealth to be limitless and wishing to benefit all his children, he gives to them equally a great cart."

The Buddha told Shariputra, "Good indeed, good indeed! It is just as you say.

"Shariputra, the Thus Come One is also like this in that he is a father to all in the world. He has forever ended all fear, weakness, worry, ignorance and obscurity. He has completely realized the limitless knowledge and vision, powers, and fearlessnesses. He has great spiritual might and the power of wisdom. He has perfected the Paramitas of Expedients and wisdom. He is greatly kind and compassionate. Never tiring, he ever seeks the good, benefitting all. And thus he is born in the Three Realms which are like a burning house. In order to save living beings from the fires of birth, old age, sickness, death, grief, misery, stupidity, dullness, and the Three Poisons. He teaches and transforms them, leading them to the attainment of Anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

"He sees all living beings are scorched by birth, old age, sickness, death, grief, and misery. They undergo various sufferings because of the Five Desires, wealth and profit. Further, because of their clinging and grasping, they presently undergo a mass of suffering and in the future will undergo suffering in the hells, among the animals, or hungry ghosts. If born in the heavens or among human beings, they will suffer poverty and distress, the suffering of being separated from what one loves, the suffering of being joined together with what one hates, and all the various sufferings such as these. However, living beings sunk in this morass, joyfully sport, unaware, unknowing, unalarmed and unafraid. They do not grow satiated nor do they seek liberation. In the burning house of the Three Realms they run about from east to west. Although they encounter tremendous suffering, they are not concerned.

"Shariputra, having seen this, the Buddha further thinks, 'I am the father of living beings. I should rescue them from this suffering and difficulty, and give them the limitless, boundless joy of the Buddha-wisdom to play with.'

"Shariputra, the Thus Come One further thinks, 'If I merely use spiritual power and the power of wisdom, and cast aside expedients, praising for all living beings the power of the Thus Come One's knowledge and vision, powers, and fearlessnesses, living beings will not be able to be saved in this way. Why is this? All of these living beings have not yet escaped birth, old age, sickness, death, grief and misery. They are being scorched in the burning house of the Three Realms. How could they understand the wisdom of the Buddha?'

"Shariputra, just as that elder, although he had a powerful body and arms, did not use them, but merely applied expedients with diligence to save all the children from disaster in the burning house, and afterwards gave to each of them a great cart adorned with precious jewels. In the same way, the Thus Come One, although he has powers and fearlessnesses, does not use them.

"He merely uses wisdom and expedients to rescue living beings from the burning house of the Three Realms, speaking to them of Three Vehicles; that of Sound Hearer, Pratyeka Buddha, and Buddha Vehicle."

"And he says to them, ' All of you should take no pleasure in dwelling in the burning house of the Three Realms. Do not lust after vulgar and evil forms, sounds, smells, tastes and tangible objects. If you attach to them greedily and give rise to love for them you will be burnt. You should quickly escape the Three Realms and obtain the Three Vehicles; the Sound Hearer, Pratyeka Buddha, and Buddha Vehicles. I now give my pledge for this and it shall never be proved false. You need only diligently and vigorously cultivate. The Thus Come One using these expedient means leads all creatures.

"He further says, 'You should all know that the Dharmas of the Three Vehicles have been praised by the sages. They will make you free, unbound, and self-reliant. Riding on these Three Vehicles, by means of non-outflow roots, powers, enlightenments, ways, Dhyanas, concentrations, liberations, Samadhis, and so on, you shall amuse yourselves and attain limitless peace and joy.

"Shariputra, if there are living beings who inwardly possess the wisdom-nature, and hearing the Dharma from the Buddha, the World Honored One, believed and accepted it, diligently making progress, wishing quickly to escape the Three Realms and seeking Nirvana for themselves. They are called those of the Sound Hearer Vehicle. They are like the children who sought the sheep cart and thereby escaped from the burning house.

"If there are living beings who hearing the Dharma from the Buddha, the World Honored One, believed and accepted it, diligently making progress, and who seek for themselves spontaneous wisdom, delighting in solitude and fond of stillness, deeply understanding the causal conditions of all Dharmas, they are called those of the Pratyeka Buddha Vehicle. They are like the children who sought the deer cart and so escaped the burning house.

"If there are living beings who hearing the Dharma from the Buddha, the World Honored One, believed and accepted it, earnestly cultivating with vigor, seeking all-wisdom, untutored wisdom, the knowledge and vision for the Thus Come One, his powers and fearlessnesses, pitying and comforting limitless living beings, benefitting gods and humans, saving all, they are called those of the Great Vehicle. Because the Bodhisattvas seek this vehicle, they are called Mahasattvas. They are like the children who sought the ox cart and so escaped the burning house.

"Shariputra, just as that elder, seeing all his children safely escape the burning house to a place of fearlessness, and considering his own unlimited wealth, gives to all of his children a great cart. Just so the Thus Come One, in the same way is the father of all living beings. When he sees limitless millions of living beings using the gateway of the Buddha's teaching to get off the fearsome and dangerous path of the suffering of the Three Realms and attain the bliss of Nirvana, he has this thought, 'I have limitless, boundless wisdom, powers, fearlessnesses and so on -- the complete storehouse of the

Buddhaharmas. All of these living beings are my children. I should give to all of them a great cart, not allowing them to gain individual extinction, but crossing them over to extinction by means of the Thus Come One's extinction. Having escaped the Three Realms, all these living beings are given as playthings the Buddha's Dhyana concentrations, liberations, and so forth, all of one mark and one kind, praised by the sages and productive of pure, wondrous, and foremost bliss.'

"Shariputra, just as that elder first having used the three carts to entice his children and then later having given them a great cart adorned with jewels and supremely comfortable, is not guilty of falsehood. Just so is the Thus Come One likewise not guilty of falsehood in first speaking of the Three Vehicles to entice living beings and then afterwards delivering them only by means of Great Vehicle. What is the reason? The Thus Come One has limitless wisdom, powers and fearlessnesses, a storehouse of Dharmas, and is able to give to all living beings the Great Vehicle Dharma. Not all living beings, however, are able to accept it. Shariputra, because of these causes and conditions you should know that the Buddhas, using the power of expedient devices, in the One Buddha Vehicle, discriminate and speak of three."

The Buddha, wishing to restate his meaning, spoke verses, saying:

*Suppose there was an elder.
Who had a large house,
Which was very old,
And so was collapsing.
The halls were high and precarious,
The pillars rotting at their bases,
The beams and ridgepoles aslant,
The foundations and stairways crumbling.
The walls and partitions were cracked and ruined,
The plaster flaking and falling off.
The thatch was falling every which way,
And the rafters and eavepoles were coming loose.
The partitions on all sides were bent and misshapen;
It was filled with all kinds of filth.*

*There were five hundred people
Dwelling within it. There were kites owls, hawks and vultures,
Crows, magpies, pigeons, and doves,
Black snakes, vipers, and scorpions,
Centipedes and millipedes.
There were geckoes and myriapods,
Weasels, badgers, and mice--
All sorts of evil creatures,
Running back and forth.
There were places stinking of excrement and urine,
Oozing with filth,*

*With dung beetles
Clustered upon them.
There were foxes, wolves, and Yeh Kan,
Who nibbled at, trampled on,
And devoured corpses,
Scattering the bones and flesh.
Then packs of dogs
Came running to grab them,
Hungry, weak, and terrified,
Seeking food everywhere,
Fighting and shoving,
Snarling, howling, and barking.
The terrors in that house,
And the sights we see such as these.
Li Mei and Wang Liang
Were everywhere.
Yakshas and evil ghosts
Were eating human flesh.
There were poisonous creatures of all kinds,
And evil birds and beasts,
Hatching their young,
Each protecting its own.
Yakshas raced to the spot
Fighting one another to eat them.
Having eaten their fill,
Their evil thoughts grew more inflamed.
The sound of their quarrelling,
Was dreadful to the extreme.
Kumbhanda ghosts
Were squatting on high ground,
Sometimes leaving the ground
A foot or two,
As they wandered to and fro
Amusing themselves as they wished,
Grabbing dogs by two legs,
And striking them so they lost their bark,
Twisting their legs around their necks,
Frightening the dogs for their own pleasure.
Further there were ghosts,
Their bodies very tall and large,
Naked, blacked, and thin,
Always dwelling therein,
Emitting loud and evil sounds,
Howling in search of food.
Further there were ghosts
With throats like needles.*

*Again there were ghosts
With heads like oxen,
Now eating human flesh,
And then devouring dogs.
Their hair was dishevelled
They were harmful, cruel and dangerous,
Oppressed by hunger and thirst,
They ran about shouting and crying out.
There were Yakshas, hungry ghosts,
And all sorts of evil birds and beasts,
Frantic with hunger, facing the four directions,
Peeking out the windows.
Such were the troubles
And terrors beyond measure there.*

*This old, decaying house
Belonged to a man
Who had gone but a short distance
When, before very long,
The rear rooms of the house
Suddenly caught fire.*

*All at one, all four sides
Were enveloped by raging flames.
The beams, ridgepoles, rafters, and pillars
Shook and split with the sound of explosion,
Snapped apart and fell,
As the walls and partitions collapses and fell in.*

*All the ghosts and spirits
Screamed loudly,
While the hawks, vultures, and other birds,
The Kumbhandas, and so forth,
Ran about in a panic,
Unable to get themselves out.*

*Evil beasts and poisonous insects
Hid away in the holes and crevices,
While the Pishacha ghosts
Also dwelt therein.*

*Their blessings and virtue scanty,
They were hard pressed by the fire;
They wrought harm on one another,
Drinking blood and eating flesh.*

*As the packs of Yeh Kan
Were already dead,
Monstrous evil beasts
Raced to devour them,
While billows of stinking smoke
Permeated all four sides.*

*Centipedes and millipedes,
And various kinds of poisonous snakes,
Burnt by the fire,
Fought to escape their holes.
Kumbhanda ghosts
Grabbed and ate them.*

*Further, all the hungry ghosts,
The tops of their heads aflame,
Tormented by hunger, thirst, and heat,
Ran about in terror and distress.*

*So it was in that house:
Terrifying to the extreme,
With dangers and conflagrations--
A host of troubles, not just one.*

*At that time the owner of the house
Was standing outside the door
When he heard someone say,
"All of your children
Awhile ago, in play,
Went into this house.
Being young and ignorant,
They delight in play and cling to amusement."
Having heard this, the elder
Entered the burning house, in alarm.*

*Intending to save them
From being burned
He warned his children
Of the host of disasters:
"The evil ghosts, the poisonous insects
And the spreading conflagration,
A host of sufferings, in succession
Are continuous, without interruption.
The poisonous snakes and vipers
And all the Yakshas,
And Kumbhanda ghosts,*

*Yeh Kan, foxes, and dogs,
Hawks, vultures, kites, and owls,
And varieties of centipedes
Are frantic with hunger and thirst,
And terrifying to the extreme.
There are so many sufferings and troubles,
So much increased by this great fire!"
But all the children, without knowledge,
Although they heard their father's warnings,
Still clung to their amusements
And sported without cease.*

*At that time, the elder
Further had this thought:
"Being like this, my children
Add to my worry and distress;
Now, in this house, there is not
A single thing in which to take pleasure,
And yet all these children
Are intoxicated by their play.
Not heeding my instructions,
They will be injured in the fire."
Just then he thought
To devise expedients.*

*He said to the children,
"I have all kinds
Of precious playthings:
Fine carriages, wonderful, bejewelled
Sheep carts, and deer carts,
And great ox carts,
Now, right outside the door.
So come out, all of you,
For I have, just for you,
Had these carts made.
Just as you wish,
You can play with them."*

*When the children heard him speak
Of carriages such as these,
They immediately raced out in a scramble,
To a clearing where
They were then safe from harm.*

*The elder, seeing that his children
Had escaped the burning house,*

*And were standing at the crossroads,
Sat on his lion's throne
And rejoiced to himself, saying,
"Now, I am happy!
All of these children
Were hard to bring into the world and raise;
Stupid, young, and without knowledge,
They went into this dangerous house,
Swarming with poisonous insects
And fearful Li Mei ghosts,
Ablaze with a great fire,
Raging on all sides.
But all these children
Still clung to their amusements.
I have now rescued them
And save them from disaster.
Therefore, of all people,
I am the happiest!"*

*Then, all the children,
Knowing their father was sitting at ease,
All went before him
And addressed him saying,
"Please give to us the three jewelled carts
That you promised to us, saying,
'If you children come out
I will give you three carts
Just like you wanted.'
Now the time has come,
Please give them to us!"*

*The elder, having great wealth,
And storehouses containing much
Gold, silver, and lapis lazuli,
Mother-of-pearl and carnelian,
Used these precious things
To make several great carts.
They were decorated and adorned,
Surrounded by railings,
Hung with bells on all four sides,
With golden cords strung about them,
And gem-studded nets
Spread above them.
There were golden flowered tassels
Hanging from them everywhere,
And various multi-colored ornaments*

*Encircling them.
Soft silk and cotton
Made up the cushions,
And fine coverings,
Valued in the thousands of millions,
Pure white and sparkling clean
Were spread atop them.
Great white oxen,
Plump, strong, and powerful,
Of fine appearance,
Were yoked to the precious carts.
They were surrounded by many footmen
Who were attending to them.
Such fine carriages as these
Were given equally to all the children.*

*Then all the children
Danced for joy;
They mounted their jeweled carts
And rode off into the four directions,
Happily amusing themselves
In unobstructed comfort.*

*I tell you, Shariputra,
I am like this, too,
The honored among many sages,
The father of the worlds.*

*All living beings
Are my children;
Deeply attached to worldly pleasures,
They have no wise thoughts at all.*

*In the Three Realms there is no peace;
They are like a burning house.
Filled with many sufferings,
And frightening indeed.
Ever present are the woes
Of birth, old age, sickness, death,
Fires such as these,
Raging without cease.*

*The Thus Come One has already left
The Three Realms burning house behind.
Quietly I dwell at ease,
In forest and field at peace.*

*And now it is, that the Three Realms,
Entirely belong to me,
And in them all the living beings
Are children of mine.
But now, this place
Is filled with calamities,
And I am the only one
Able to rescue them.*

*Although I instruct them,
They do not believe or accept,
Because of their deep attachment and greed
Too all the defiling desires.*

*Using the expedients,
I speak to them of Three Vehicles,
Causing all living beings
To understand the pain of the Three Realms.
I reveal and extensively proclaim
The path which transcends the world.
All of these children,
If they fix their minds,
Can perfect the Three Clarities
And the Six Spiritual Powers.*

*Some shall become Conditioned-enlightened Ones,
And others irreversible Bodhisattvas.*

*Shariputra,
I, for living beings,
Speak this parable
Of the One Buddha Vehicle.
If all of you are able
To believe and accept these words,
You shall, in the future,
Realize the Buddha way.
This vehicle is subtle and wonderful,
Pure and foremost.
In all of the worlds
It is the most supreme.
The Buddhas rejoice in it,
And all living beings
Should praise it as well.
Make offerings and bow before it.
Limitless thousands of millions
Of powers and liberations,*

*Dhyana Samadhis and wisdom,
And the Buddhas' other Dharmas
Are obtained in a vehicle such as this.*

*I cause all my children,
Night and day for many aeons,
Ever to amuse themselves
In the company of the Bodhisattvas
And the host of Sound Hearers,
Riding this precious vehicle
Straight to the field of the way.
For these reasons,
Though they seek in the ten directions,
There is no other vehicle
Except for the Buddhas' expedients.*

*I tell you, Shariputra,
That all of you
Are my children,
And I am your father.
For many aeons, you
Have been burned by many miseries,
And I have saved you all,
Leading you out of the Three Realm.
Although earlier I said
That you had passed into extinction,
It was only an end to birth and death
And not real extinction.
What you should accomplish now,
Is nothing but the Buddhas' wisdom.
If there are Bodhisattvas
Within this assembly,
They can singlemindedly listen to
The Buddha's real Dharma.
Although the Buddhas, World Honored Ones,
Employ expedient devices,
The living beings they transform
All are Bodhisattvas.*

*If there are those of little wisdom,
Deeply attached to love and desire,
For their sakes
I teach the Truth of Suffering.
Living beings then rejoice
Gaining what they never had,
For the Buddha's teaching of suffering's truth*

*Is true, real, and not false.
If there are living beings,
Who do not know the origin of suffering,
Who are deeply attached to the cause of suffering,
Unable to leave it for even a moment,
For their sakes
I expediently speak of the path.
The cause of all suffering
Is rooted in desire.
If one extinguishes greed and desire,
Suffering has nothing to rest upon.
The extinction of all suffering
Is called the third truth.
For the sake of the truth of extinction,
One cultivates the path;
Leaving all suffering's bonds
Is called the attainment of liberation.
From what is it
That these people have been liberated?
The mere separation from the false
Is called liberation.
In reality they have not yet
Attained total liberation.
The Buddha says that these people
Have not yet truly reached extinction,
Because they have not yet attained
The unsurpassed path.
It is not my wish
To lead them to extinction.
I am the Dharma king,
At ease within all the Dharmas.
I manifest within this world
To bring peace and tranquility to living beings.*

*Shariputra!
This Dharma seal of mine
Is spoken because I wish
To benefit the world.
Wherever you roam,
Do not propagate it wrongly.*

*If there be those who hear it,
And rejoice, receiving it atop their crowns,
You should know that such people
Are Avaivartika.
Those who believe and accept*

*The Dharma of this Sutra,
These people have already seen
The Buddhas of the past,
Reverently making offerings,
And hearing this Dharma as well.
Those who are able
To believe what you say,
They then see me,
And they see you,
And also the Bhikshusangha.
As well as all the Bodhisattvas.
This Sutra of the Dharma flower
Is spoken for those of profound wisdom;
When those of shallow understanding hear it,
Confused and deluded, they fail to understand it.
The Sound Hearers, every one,
And the Pratyeka Buddhas,
Find the contents of this Sutra
Far beyond their powers.
You, Shariputra,
Gained entry to this Sutra
By means of faith.
How much the more so other Sound Hearers.
Those Sound Hearers,
Because of their faith in the Buddha's words,
Comply with this Sutra.
But it's beyond their range of their own wisdom.*

*Further, Shariputra
To the arrogant and lazy
And those who reckon the view of self,
Do not speak this Sutra.
Common folk of shallow understanding,
Deeply attached to the Five Desires,
Hearing it, will fail to understand;
Do not speak it to them, either.
If there be those who don't believe,
And who slander this Sutra,
They thereby sever all
Worldly Buddha seeds.
Or if, with a scowl,
They harbor doubts and delusions
You should listen now,
As I speak of their offense-retribution:
Whether a Buddha is in the world,
Or has entered into extinction.*

*If there be those who slander
A Sutra such as this one,
Who, seeing others read or recite it,
Copy it out or uphold it,
Scorn, despise, hate and envy them,
And harbor grudges against them,
As to their offense retribution,
Listen now, once again:
These people at life's end
Will enter the Avichi hell
For an entire aeon.
At the aeon's end, born there again,
In this way they will revolve,
Through uncountable aeons,
When they escape from the hells,
They shall take the bodies of animals,
Such as dogs or Yeh Kan,
Tall and emaciated,
Mottled, black, and scabbed,
Repulsive to others.
Further, by human beings,
They will be hated and scorned;
Always suffering from hunger and thirst,
Their bones and flesh will be withheld up.
During their lives they will be pricked by poisonous thorns;
When dead they will be buried under tiles and stones.
They suffer this offense retribution,
Because they have severed their Buddha seeds.
They may become camels
Or they may be born among asses,
Always carrying heavy burdens
And beaten with sticks and whips,
Thinking only of water and grass,
And knowing nothing else.
They suffer retribution such as this
Because of slandering this Sutra.
Some may become Yeh Kan,
Entering villages,
Their bodies covered with scabs and sores,
And also missing an eye,
Beaten and stoned
by young children,
Undergoing all this pain,
Even to the point of death.
Having died in this manner
They are then reborn as huge serpents,*

*Their bodies as long as five hundred Yojanas.
Deaf and stupid, without feet,
They writhe about on their stomachs,
Stung and eaten
By many small insects.
Undergoing suffering day and night
Without respite,
They suffer such retribution
For having slandered this Sutra.
If they become humans,
All their faculties are dim and dull.
They are squat, ugly palsied, lame,
Blind, deaf, and hunchbacked.
Whatever they may say,
People will not believe them.
Their breath ever stinking,
They will be possessed by ghosts,
Poor and lowly,
The servants of others,
Always sick and emaciated,
With no one to reply upon.
Although they may draw near to others,
Others will never think of them.
If they should gain something
They will quickly forget and lose it.
Should they study the ways of medicine,
Following the prescription to cure illness,
They will only make other's illnesses worse.
Even to the point of death.
If they get sick themselves,
No one will try to save or cure them.
Although they take good medicine,
It will only increase their pains.
If they meet with rebellion,
They will be plundered and robbed.
People with such offenses,
Will preversely be subject to such misfortunes.
Offenders such as these
Will never see the Buddha,
The king among the sagely hosts,
Speaking the Dharma, teaching and transforming,
Offenders such as these
Will always be born in difficult circumstances.
Insane, deaf, with mind confused,
They will never hear the Dharma.
Throughout aeons as countless*

*As the Ganges River's sands,
They will be born deaf and dumb,
With all their faculties incomplete;
They will always dwell in the hells,
Roaming there as if in pleasure gardens,
Or born in the other evil paths,
Which they will take as their house and home.
Among camels, asses, pigs, and dogs--
These are the places they will walk.
They undergo such retribution,
Because of slandering this Sutra.
If they become humans,
They will be deaf, blind, and dumb,
Poor and decrepit,
Yet adorning themselves therewith.
Swollen with water, or else dehydrated,
With scabs and boils,
And other such illnesses,
They will clothe themselves.
Their bodies will always stink
Of filth and impurity.
Deeply attached to the view of self,
Their hatred shall only increase.
Ablaze with sexual desire,
They are no different than birds or beasts.
They will suffer such retribution
For having slandered this Sutra.*

*I tell you, Shariputra,
Were I to speak of the offenses
Of those who slander this Sutra,
I wouldn't finish to the end of an aeon.
For these reasons,
I expressly tell you,
Do not speak this Sutra
Among those who have no wisdom.*

*If there are those with keen faculties,
And wisdom which clearly comprehends,
With much learning and a strong memory,
Who seek the Buddha's path,
For people such as these,
You may speak it.
If there are those who have seen in the past
Hundreds of thousands of millions of Buddhas,
Who have planted wholesome roots,*

*Who have deep and firm minds,
For people such as these,
You may speak it.
If there are those who are vigorous,
Ever cultivating minds of compassion,
Not sparing body or life,
For them you may speak it.
If there are those who are reverent,
Without any other thoughts,
Who have left the common stupid folk,
Who dwell alone in mountains and marshes,
For people such as these
You may speak it.
Further, Shariputra,
If you see people
Who have cast aside bad knowing advisors,
And drawn near to good friends,
For people such as these,
You may speak it.
If you see disciples of the Buddha,
Holding precepts as purely,
As pure, bright jewels,
For people such as these,
You may speak it.
Further, Shariputra,
If you see people
Who have cast aside bad knowing advisors,
And drawn near to good friends,
For people such as these,
You may speak it.
If you see disciples of the Buddha,
Holding precepts as purely,
As pure, bright jewels,
For people such as these,
You may speak it.
If there are those who have no hatred
Who are straightforward and gentle,
Always merciful to all beings,
And reverent of all Buddhas,
For people such as these,
You may speak it.
Further, if there are Buddha's disciples,
Who in the great assembly,
With minds clear and pure,
Use various causal conditions,
Parables and phrases,*

*To speak the Dharma without obstruction,
For people such as these,
You may speak it.
If there are Bhikshus,
Who, for the sake of all-wisdom,
Seek the Dharma in the four directions,
With palms together, receiving it atop the crown,
Who delight only in receiving and upholding
The canon of Great Vehicle Sutras,
Refusing to accept so much
As a single line from another scripture,
For people such as these,
You may speak it.
If there be those who, with mind intent,
Seek the Buddha's Sharira,
Or who likewise seek the Sutras,
And attaining them hold them atop their crowns,
Such people will never again
Resolve to seek other Sutras
Nor ever have the thought
To seek the writings of outside ways,
For people such as these,
You may speak it.*

*I tell you, Shariputra,
Were I to speak of the characteristics
Of those who seek the Buddha's path,
Exhausting aeons, I would not finish.
People such as these
Can believe and understand,
And for their sake's you should speak
The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra.*

CHAPTER FOUR

BELIEF AND UNDERSTANDING

At that time the wise and long-lived Subhuti, Mahakatyayana, Mahakashyapa, Mahamaudgalyayana, having heard from the Buddha, Dharma such as they had never heard before, the bestowal of the prediction of Anuttarasamyaksambodhi upon Shariputra, felt it very rare. They rose from their seats, jumped for joy, straightened their robes, bared their right shoulders, placed their right knees on the ground, singlemindedly put their palms together, inclined themselves respectfully, gazed at the Honored Countenance.

And spoke to the Buddha, saying, "We, who dwell at the head of the Sangha and are advanced in years, told ourselves that we had already attained Nirvana and had no further responsibility, and we did not go forward to seek Anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

"The World Honored One has, from of old, been speaking the Dharma for a long time, sitting here all this time, our bodies tired, we have merely been mindful of emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness, taking no delight in the Bodhisattva-Dharmas, in their Samadhis of playfulness, in their purification of Buddhalands, or in their maturation of living beings.

"What is the reason? The World Honored One has led us to escape the Three Realms and attain certification to Nirvana. Besides, we are now advanced in years and when the Buddha taught the Bodhisattvas of Anuttarasamyaksambodhi, we did not give rise to even a single thought of longing for it.

"Now, in the presence of the Buddha, having heard him bestow upon the Sound Hearers the Anuttarasamyaksambodhi prediction, our hearts rejoice enthusiastically and we obtain what we never have had. We never thought that now we would suddenly be able to hear this rare Dharma. We rejoice profoundly, having gained great and good benefit.

"It is as if, without our seeking them, limitless precious gems had come into our possession.

"World Honored One, we would now like to speak a parable to clarify this principle.

"It is as if there were a person who, in his youth, left his father and ran away, dwelling long in another country, perhaps ten, twenty or even fifty years.

"As he grew older, he became poor and needy and ran about in the four directions in search of clothing and food. Gradually he wandered until he accidentally approached his native land.

"His father, from the first, had set out seeking his son but in vain. He settled midway in a city. His household was one of great wealth, with limitless wealth and jewels, gold, silver, lapis lazuli, coral, amber, crystal, pearls, and other jewels. His granaries and treasures were overflowing, and he had many servants, ministers and assistants, as well as countless elephants, horses, carriages, cattle, and sheep. The profits from his trade extended to the other countries, and there were also many traders and merchants.

"Then the poor son, having wandered through various villages and passed through countries and cities, at last reached the city where his father had settled.

"The father had always been mindful of his son. Although they had been separated for over fifty years, he had never spoken of the matter to anyone, but merely pondered over it, his heart filled with regret as he thought, 'I am old and decrepit. I have much wealth, gold, silver, and precious gems, granaries and storehouses filled to overflowing. Such a

pity that I have no son! One day I'm bound to die, and when I do, my wealth will be scattered and lost, for I have no one to bequeath them to.' This is why he ever earnestly thought of his son. 'If I could only get my son back, I'd make him heir to my wealth. I'd be contented, and happy and have no further worries.'

"World Honored One, the poor son then, hiring himself as a laborer here and there, unexpectedly arrived at this father's house. Standing by the gate, he saw his father seated on a Lion-seat. His feet were resting on a jeweled footstool, and he was reverently surrounded by Brahmans, Kshatriyas, and laypeople. Necklaces of real pearls, their value in the millions, adorned his body. Attendants and servants, holding white whisks, waited on him right and left. Above him was a jeweled canopy hung with flowers and pennants. Fragrant water was sprinkled on the ground, and expensive flowers were scattered about. Precious objects were placed in rows, which were passed out and taken in on leaving and entering. Such were the adornments, and the majesty and authority of his awesome virtue. When the poor soon saw his father, possessed of such great power, he was immediately afraid and regretted having come there. Secretly he thought, 'This is perhaps a king, or one equal to a king. This is no place for me to hire myself out. I'd better go to a poor village where there will be room for me to work and where I can easily obtain clothing and food. If I stay here any longer, I may be forced to work.' And with this thought, he quickly ran off.

"Then the wealthy elder, seated on the Lion-seat, seeing his son, recognized him and his heart rejoiced greatly, as he thought, 'I now have someone to whom I can bequeath my wealth and treasures. I have constantly been mindful of my son, but had no way of seeing him. Then, all of a sudden, he came on his own, and my wish has been fulfilled. Although I am old and decrepit I still longed for him with regret.'

"He then sent attendants to follow him and bring him back. Thereupon, the servants quickly apprehended him. The poor son in alarm shouted in resentment, 'I have committed no offense. Why have I been seized?' The servants, with even greater haste, grabbed him and dragged him back. The poor son thought to himself, 'I am blameless and yet have been imprisoned. This surely means that I will die,' and, even more frightened, he fainted and fell to the ground.

"The father saw his son from afar and said to the servant, 'I do not need this person. Do not force him to come along. Sprinkle cold water on his face to bring him to, but do not speak further with him'. Why was this? The father knew that his son's resolve and will were inferior and lowly, and that his own nobility was a source of difficulty to his son. Therefore, although he was certain that this was his son, he expediently refrained from telling anyone, 'This is my son.' The servant said to the son, 'I now set you free. You may go wherever you wish.' The poor son was delighted, having gained what he had never had before. He rose from the ground and went to a poor village to seek clothing and food.

"Then the elder, wishing to induce his son, set up an expedient and secretly sent two people, haggard and undignified in appearance, saying to them, 'You may go there and

gently speak to that poor one. Tell him there is a place for him to work here where he can earn twice as much. If he agrees, bring him back and put him to work. If he asks what he is to do, tell him, 'You are being hired to sweep out dung. We two will work along with you'.

"Then the two servants sought out the poor son, and when they found him, they told him the above matter in detail.

"At that time the poor son first took his salary and then joined them in sweeping away the dung. When the father saw his son, he felt pity and amazement.

"Later, on another day, through a window, he saw his son at a distance, thin, haggard, soiled with dung, dirt, and filth. He then removed his necklace of beads, his soft upper garments, and his adornments and put on a coarse, worn out, and filthy robe, smeared himself with dirt and holding a dung shovel, looking frightful. He addressed his workers, saying, 'All of you, work hard! Do not be lax.' By this device he draws near to his son, to whom he later says, 'Hey, my boy! you should stay here and work. Don't go elsewhere. I will increase your wages. Whatever you need, be it pots, utensils, rice, flour, salt or vinegar or other such things, don't trouble yourself about it. I also have an old worn out servant you can have if you need him. So put your mind at rest. I am like your father, so have no more worries. Why? I am very old, and you are young and strong. Whenever you are working, you are never deceitful, remiss, angry, hateful, or grumbling. I have never seen you commit such evils as I have the other workers. From now on you shall be just like my own son.'

"Just then the elder gave him a name, calling him his son. The poor son, although delighted at his happening, still referred to himself as a lowly worker from outside. For this reason, for twenty years he was constantly kept at work sweeping away dung.

"After this, they trusted one another, and he came and went without difficulty. However, he still stayed in the same place as before.

"World Honored One, at that time, the elder grew sick and knew he would die before long. He said to the poor son, 'I now possess much gold, silver, and jewels, and my granaries and storehouses are filled to overflowing. You should know the detail their quantities and the amounts to be received and given. Such are my thoughts, and you should understand what I mean. What is the reason? You and I are now no difference. You should be even more careful that nothing be lost.'

"At that time, the poor son, having received these instructions, took charge of all the goods, the gold, silver, and precious gems, as well as the granaries and storehouses, and yet he did not long for so much as a single meal. He continued to stay in the same place, still unable to let go of his lowly thoughts.

"After a short while, the father knew that his son had grown more relaxed, that he had accomplished the great resolve and despised his former state of mind. Knowing that his

own end was near, he ordered his son to gather ministers, Kshatriyas, and laypeople. When they had all assembled, he spoke to them saying, 'All of you gentlemen should know that this is my son, begotten by me. In a certain city, he left me and ran away to suffer desolation, poverty, and hardship for over fifty years. His original name was such and such, and my name was such. Long ago, in my native city, I anxiously sought him. This is really my son. I am really his father. All of my wealth now belongs to my son, and all that has been paid out and taken in is known by him.'

"World Honored One, when the poor son heard what his father had said, he rejoiced greatly, having obtained what he had never had, and he thought, 'Originally, I had no thought to seek anything, and now this treasury has come to me of itself.'

"World Honored One, the great and wealthy elder is the Thus Come One. We are all like the Buddha's sons. The Thus Come One always says that we are his sons.

"World Honored One, because of the three kinds of sufferings, we have suffered much torment in the midst of births and deaths. Deluded and ignorant, we clung to petty Dharmas.

"Today, the World Honored One has caused us to think about getting rid of the dung of frivolous discussions of the Dharma. We increased our vigor to earn one day's wage of Nirvana. Having attained this, our hearts rejoiced greatly, and we were content, saying to ourselves that, through our diligence and vigor, what we had gained in the Buddhadharma was plentiful.

"However, the World Honored One, knowing all along that our minds were attached to lowly desires and took delight in petty Dharmas, let us go our own way and did not specify to us saying, 'You are all to have a share in the treasury of the Thus Come One's knowledge and vision.'

"The World Honored One, using the power of expedient devices, has spoken of the Thus Come One's wisdom. Having gained from the Buddha the one day's wage of Nirvana, we took it to be a great attainment; we had no ambition to seek the Great Vehicle. Besides, the wisdom of the Thus Come One had been set forth for the sake of the Bodhisattvas, and so he held no expectations regarding it. What is the reason? The Buddha knew that our minds took delight in petty Dharmas. He used the power of expedients to teach us in the appropriate manner, and we did not know that we were truly the Buddha's sons.

"Now we know that the World Honored One is by no means ungenerous with the Buddha's wisdom. Why? From of old, we truly have been the Buddha's sons, and yet we delighted only in petty Dharmas. If we had thought to delight in the great, the Buddha would then have spoken for us the Great Vehicle Dharma. This Sutra speaks of only One Vehicle. In the past, in the presence of the Bodhisattvas, the Buddha had belittled the Sound Hearers who delight in lesser Dharmas, but he was actually employing the Great Vehicle in teaching and transforming them.

"Therefore, we say that originally we had not hoped for or sought anything, and yet now these great jewels of the Dharma King have come to us of themselves. That which the Buddha's sons should attain, we have already attained."

At that time, Mahakashyapa, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying,

*We, on this day,
Hearing the sound of the Buddha's teaching.
Jump for joy!-
Gaining what we never had.
The Buddha says that Sound Hearers,
Shall come Buddhas in the future.
A cluster of supreme gems,
we have gained, without our seeking.*

*It is like a youth,
Who, young and ignorant,
Ran away from his father
To another distant land,
Roaming from country to country
For fifty years and more.*

*His father worried about him,
Sought him in the four directions
Until, tired of the search.
He stopped in a certain city,
Where he built himself a house
And amused himself with the Five Desires.
His household was large and wealthy,
With much gold and silver,
Mother of pearls, and lapis lazuli,
Elephants, horses, cattle, and sheep,
Hand-drawn carts, palangins, and chariots,
Husbandsmen and servants,
And a multitude of subjects.
The profits from his trade
Extended to the other countries.
Traders and merchants
Were present everywhere.
Multitudes in the hundreds of millions.
Surrounded him reverentially.
And always, by kings,
He was cherished and remembered.
The ministers and noble clans
All honored him.
For these reasons,*

*Those who came and went were many.
Such was his nobility, wealth,
And his great authority.*

*But then, as he grew old and decrepit,
He was filled with worry for his son.
Morning and evening, his only thought was,
"My time of death is drawing near.
My foolish son has left me now,
For over fifty years.
The things in my granaries and storehouses-
Whatever shall I do with them?"*

*Then the poor son,
Seeking clothing and food,
Went from city to city,
From country to country,
Sometimes getting something,
Sometimes getting nothing.
Starving, emaciated,
Covered with scabs,
He went on his way until eventually,
He arrived in the city where his father lived.*

*Hiring himself out along the way,
He finally reached his father's house,
At that time, the elder,
Within his gateway,
Was covered by a large canopy,
And seated on a Lion-throne,
Surrounded by his retinue,
And various attendants.
Some of them were counting up
His gold, silver, and other valuables,
His income and expenses were
Recorded there on ledgers.
When the poor son saw his father,
Of such nobility and wealth,
He said, "This must be a king,
Or the equal of a king."
In fright, he reproved himself,
"Why have I come here?"
And further to himself, he said,
"If I stay here long,
I may be oppressed
And forced to go to work."*

*Having had this thought,
He hurriedly ran off
To a poor village, asking
To be hired out to work.*

*Just then, the elder,
Seated on the Lion-throne,
Saw his son at a distance,
And silently recognized him.*

*He then commanded his attendants to seize him and bring him back.
The poor son cried out in alarm,
And fainted, falling to the ground.
"These people have caught me!
I shall certainly be killed!
Why, for food and clothing's sake
Did I come to this place?"
The elder knew that his son
Was foolish and lowly.
"He wouldn't believe me if I told him.
He wouldn't believe tha I am his father."*

*Then he used an expedient,
And sent some other men,
One-eyed, squat, and ugly,
Lacking awesome virtue.
"Speak to him," he said.
"And tell him, 'You will work with us
Getting rid of dung and filth
At twic your normal wages.'"
When the poor son heard this,
He happily followed them back
And swept out the dung and filth,
Cleaning all the dwellings.*

*From his window, the elder
Would often watch his son,
Remembering that he was foolish and lowly
And enjoyed menial work.
Then the elder
Put on a worn and dirty robe,
And, holding a dung shovel,
Went to where his son was.
Expediently drawing near to him,
He said, "Work with diligence,
For I have increased your wages,*

*And shall give you oil for your feet,
And your fill of food and drink,
And thick, warm bedding."
Thus he spoke sharply saying,
"You must work hard!"
And then in gentler tones, he added,
"You are like my own son."*

*The elder, in his wisdom,
Eventually allowed him to come and go.
For a period of twenty years,
He was put in charge of household business.
He showed him his gold, silver,
Real pearls and crystal.
The income and expense of all these things,
He was caused to know.
And yet the son still lived outside the gate,
Dwelling in a grass hut
Thinking of his poverty:
"None of these things are mine."*

*The father knew his son's mind
Gradually had expanded,
And wishing to give him wealth,
He gathered together his relatives,
The kings, and great ministers,
The Kshatriyas and laypeople.
In the midst of this great assembly,
He said, "This is my son.
He left me and went away
Fifty years ago.
And it has been twenty years
Since I saw him return.
Long ago in a certain city
I lost my son.
Searching for him everywhere,
I came to this place.
Everything that I own,
My houses and servants,
I bequeath it all to him
That he may use it as he pleases."*

*The son, recalling his former poverty
And his lowly intentions,
Who now, in his father's presence
Had obtained these precious jewels,*

*And these dwelling places,
And all such wealth,
Greatly rejoiced,
Having gained what he'd never had.*

*The Buddha in the same way
Knew our fondness for the petty.
And so he never said to us,
"You shall become Buddhas."
Instead he said that we
Could attain cessation of all outflows,
Realize the lesser vehicle,
And become Sound Hearer Disciples.*

*The Buddha had instructed us
To speak of the unsurpassed Path,
And spoken of those who practice it
As being able to accomplish Buddhahood.
Receiving the Buddha's teaching, we
For the sake of the Great Bodhisattvas,
Use causes and conditions,
Various analogies,
And numerous expressions
To speak of the unsurpassed Path.
All the Buddha's disciples.
Having heard from us this Dharma,
Think upon it day and night,
And diligently practice it.
Thereupon, all the Buddhas,
Then bestow predictions upon them,
Saying, "You, in a future age,
Shall become Buddhas."
This is the secret store of Dharma,
Of all the Buddhas.
Only for the Bodhisattvas
Are such real matters set forth.
And not for our sakes
Have such true essentials been spoken.*

*Just as the poor son
Drew near his father, and
Although he knew of all his possessions,
In his heart he held no hope of getting them.
In just the same way,
Even though we have spoken*

*Of the Buddhadharma's precious store,
we personally never aspired to it.*

*Having attained inner-extinction,
We thought this sufficient,
For having completed this,
There was nothing else to be done.
And even if we had heard
Of purifying Buddhalands,
And teaching and transforming living beings,
We'd have taken no delight therein,
And for what reason?
All Dharmas are
Completely empty and still,
Neither produced nor destroyed,
Neither great nor small,
Without outflows and unconditioned.
Reflecting in this way,
We did not give rise to joy.
During the long night,
We had no craving or attachment
For the Buddha's wisdom,
Nor did we aspire to it.
Yet, as to Dharma, we
Claimed we had the ultimate.
All through the long night,
We practiced and cultivated the
Dharma of emptiness.
Having won release from the Three Realms
With its suffering, distress and calamities,
We dwell within our final bodies,
In Nirvana with residue,
According to the Buddha's teaching,
We attained the Way which is not false,
And we assumed that we had
Thereby repaid the Buddha's kindness.*

*Although we, for the sake
Of the Buddha's disciples spoke
Of the Bodhisattvas Dharma,
with which they should seek Buddhahood,
Still in this Dharma,
We never took delight at all.
Our master saw this and let things be,
Because he saw into our hearts,*

*And so, at first, he did not encourage us
By telling of the real advantage.*

*Just as the wealthy elder
Used the power of expedients
To bring his mind under control,
And afterwards gave to him
All of his valuables,
The Buddha in the same way
Manifests rare things,
But for those who delight in the small,
He uses the power of expedients
To bring their minds under control,
Only then teaching the greater wisdom.*

*On this day, we
have gained what we never had!
That for which we lacked hope,
We now have attained.
Just as the poor son
Gained limitless treasure,
O World Honored One, now
We've obtained the Path and its fruits.
Within the non-outflow Dharma
We've gained the eye, pure and clear.
During the long night, we
Maintained the Buddhas pure morality
But only on this day,
Have we gained this reward.
In the Dharma King's Dharma,
Long have we cultivated Brahman conduct.
Now we've obtained that non-outflow,
the unsurpassed, great fruition.*

*Now we are all
Truly Sound Hearers.
And taking the sound of the Buddha's Way.
We cause all to hear it.
Now we are all
Truly Arhats,
And in all the world,
With its gods, people, Maras and Brahmas,
Everywhere among them
We are worthy of receiving offerings.*

*The World Honored One in his great kindness,
Uses this rare thing,
To pity, teach,
And benefit us,
Throughout limitless millions of aeons.
Who could repay him?
Giving one's hands and feet.
Bowing reverently in obeisance,
Whatever offering one makes,
Never repays him.
If one bore him on one's head,
Or carried him upon one's shoulders,
For aeons as numerous as the Ganges' sands,
Exhausting one's mind in reverence-
Or further, if one used delicacies,
And limitless valuable clothing,
and all types of bedding,
And various medicines,
Ox-head sandalwood,
And various precious gems,
Or stupas and temples
Covering the ground with valuable cloth,
And if with such things as these,
One made offerings
Throughout aeons as numerous as the Ganges sands,
One still never repays him.
The Buddhas are rare indeed.
Limitless and boundless,
Yes, inconceivable is the power,
Of their great spiritual penetrations.
Without outflows, unconditioned,
They are Kings of all the Dharmas.
For the sake of lesser beings,
They bear up under this work.
To common folks who grasp at marks,
They teach what is appropriate.
The Buddhas have, within the Dharmas,
Attained to the highest comfort.
They understand all living beings'
Various desires and delights,
As well as the strength of their resolve,
According to what they can bear,
Using limitless analogies,
They teach them the Dharma,
In accord with living beings'
Wholesome roots from former lives.*

*And knowing those who have matured,
And those who have not yet matured,
Through such calculations,
They discriminate and understand,
And in the pathway of One Vehicle,
They appropriately speak of three.*

CHAPTER FIVE

MEDICINAL HERBS

At that time the World Honored One told Mahakashyapa and all the great disciples, "Good indeed! Good indeed! Kashyapa has well spoken of the Thus Come One's real and true merit and virtue. It is just as he said. Furthermore, the Thus Come One has limitless, boundless Asankheyas of merit and virtue. If you were to speak of it throughout limitless millions of aeons, you could not finish.

"Kashyapa, you should know that the Thus Come One is the king of all the Dharmas. Nothing that he teaches is false. He extensively proclaims all Dharmas by means of wisdom and expedients, and whatever Dharmas he speaks all lead to the ground of all wisdom.

"The Thus Come One contemplates and knows the tendencies of all Dharmas. He also knows the depths of the mental processes of all living beings, having penetrated them without obstruction. Furthermore, he has ultimate and clear understanding of all Dharmas, and he instructs living beings in all-wisdom.

"Kashyapa, consider the world of three thousand great thousand worlds and the grasses, trees, forests, as well as the medicinal herbs, in their many varieties, with their different names and colors which the mountains, streams, valleys and flatlands produce. A thick cloud spreads out, covering the three thousand great thousand worlds, raining on them equally everywhere at the same time, its moisture reaching every part. The grasses, trees, forests and medicinal herbs - those of small roots, small stalks, small branches and small leaves, those of medium-sized roots, medium-sized stalks, medium-sized branches, medium-sized leaves or those of large roots, large stalks, large branches, and large leaves, and also all the trees, whether great or small, according to their size, small, medium, or large, all receive a portion of it. From the rain of the one cloud each according to its nature grows, blossoms, and bears fruit.

Although they grow from the same ground and are moistened by the same rain, still, all the grasses and trees are different.

"Kashyapa, you should know that the Thus Come One is also like this. He manifests in the world like a great cloud rising; with his great sound he covers the world with its gods, humans, and Asuras, just like that great cloud covers the three thousand great thousand lands. In the midst of the great assembly he announces, "I am the Thus Come One, one worthy of offerings, one of proper and universal knowledge, one whose understanding

and conduct are complete, well gone one who understands the world, an unsurpassed lord, a taming and regulating hero, teacher of gods and humans, the Buddha, the World Honored One. Those who have not yet been crossed over, I cross over. Those who have not yet been liberated, I liberate. Those who have not yet been put at rest, I put at rest. Those who have not yet attained Nirvana, I cause to attain Nirvana. I know things as they really are, both in the present and in the future. I am the all-knowing one, the all-seeing one, the one who knows the Way, the one who opens the Way, the one who proclaims the Way. The entire assembly of gods, humans and Asuras, all should come here to listen to the Dharma."

Then, countless thousands of myriads of millions of kinds of living beings came before the Buddha to hear the Dharma.

Then, the Thus Come One, contemplating the sharpness and dullness of the faculties of these living beings, their vigor or laxness, according to their capacity, spoke the Dharma for their sakes in limitless varieties, causing them all to rejoice and quickly attain good benefit. After having heard this Dharma, all of these living beings presently are at ease; in the future, they will be born in a good place. By means of the Way, they will enjoy happiness and also be able to hear the Dharma. Having heard the Dharma, they will separate from all coverings and obstructions. Within all the Dharmas, according to their powers, they will gradually gain entry to the Way.

Just as that great cloud rains down on all the grasses, trees, forests, and medicinal herbs and each, according to its nature, fully receives the moisture and grows.

So, too, the Thus Come One speaks of a Dharma having one mark and one taste, that is to say: the mark of liberation, the mark of extinction, culminating in the wisdom of all modes.

Those living beings who, hearing the Thus Come One's Dharma, uphold read, recite and cultivate it as taught will not themselves be aware of the merit and virtue they obtain.

What is the reason? Only the Thus Come One knows the kinds, the marks, the substances, and the natures of these living beings, what they are recollecting, what they are thinking, and what they are cultivating; how they are recollecting, how they are thinking, and how they are cultivating; by means of what Dharma they cultivate; and by means of what Dharma they obtain what Dharma. Living beings dwell on a variety of levels. Only the Thus Come One sees them as they really are, clearly and without obstruction. Just as those grasses, trees, and forests and all the medicinal herbs do not know themselves whether their natures are superior, middle, or inferior.

The Thus Come One knows the Dharma of one mark, of one flavor, that is to say: the mark of liberation, the mark of separation, the mark of extinction, the mark of ultimate Nirvana which is constantly still and extinct and which in the end returns to emptiness.

Already understanding this the Buddha contemplates the desires in the minds of living beings and protects them. For this reason he does not immediately speak of the wisdom of all modes.

Kashyapa, you are all very rare in your ability to know that the Thus Come One speaks the Dharma as it is appropriate, and in your ability to believe and accept it. Why is this? All the Buddhas, the World Honored Ones speak an appropriate Dharma which is difficult to understand, difficult to know.

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning spoke verses, saying:

*Destroyer of existence, the Dharma King
Manifests within the world;
According to living beings' desires,
He teaches the Dharma in various ways.
The Thus Come One, out of veneration
For this wisdom, deep and far-reaching,
Has long remained silent on this important matter.
Being in no hurry to set it forth.
Those with wisdom, if they heard it,
Would be able to believe and understand it,
But those lacking wisdom would doubt it
And thereby lose it for a long time
for this reason, Kashyapa,
It is spoken in accord with their powers
Employing various conditions
To lead them to the right view.*

*Kashyapa, you should know
It is like a great cloud
Rising above the world
And covering all
A wisdom cloud filled with moisture
illuminated with lightening flashes
And vibrating with thunderous roars
It brings delight to all,
Obscuring the light of the sun,
Refreshing the earth
The cloud lowers and expands
As if one could reach out and touch it.
It rains equally everywhere
Falling alike in the four directions
Pouring without measure
saturating all the land.*

*In the mountains, streams and steep valleys,
In deep recesses, there grow
Grasses, trees, and herbs,
And trees, both great and small,
The grains, shoots, and plants,
The sugar-cane and the grape vine;
All are nourished by the rain,
And none fail to be enriched.
The parched ground is soaked,
The herbs and trees together flourish.
Issuing from that cloud
Water of a single flavor
Moistens grasses, trees and forests
Each according to its measure
All of the trees,
Great, medium and small,
According to their size
Can grow and develop.
When reached by that single rain
The roots, stalks, branches, and leaves,
Flowers and fruits with luster and color,
All are fresh and shining.*

*According to their substance and marks,
And natures, either great or small
They alike receive moisture
And each one flourishes.*

*The Buddha, in the same way
Manifests within the world
Just like a great cloud
Covering over everything.
Having come into the world
For the sake of living beings,
He discriminates and expounds
The reality of all Dharmas.
The Great Sage, the World Honored One,
In the midst of the multitudes
Of gods and humans
Proclaims these words saying:
"I am the Thus Come One
The doubly complete honored one.
I appear within the world
Like a great cloud
Moistening all
The dried-out living beings,*

*So they all leave suffering
And gain peace and bliss
Worldly joy
And the joy of Nirvana.
All gods and humans assembled here
Listen singlemindedly and well.
You should all come here
To behold the Unsurpassed Honored One,
I am the World Honored One,
The one beyond compare.
To bring peace and ease to living beings
I manifest within the world
And for the sake of the assembly speak
The sweet dew of pure Dharma
The Dharma of a single flavor,
That of liberation and Nirvana.
using a single, wondrous sound
I proclaim this principle
Constantly creating the causes and conditions
For the Great Vehicle.*

*I contemplate all
Everywhere as equal,
Without "this" or "that"
And without thoughts of love or hate.
I have no greed or attachment,
And no limitations or obstacles.
Constantly for everyone,
I speak the Dharma, equally,
Speaking for a single person,
As I would for the multitudes.
I constantly expound and proclaim the Dharma
And have no other work.
Coming, going, sitting and standing
I never grow weary,
Filling the entire world,
Like the moisture of the universal rain.*

*For the noble, the lowly, the superior and inferior;
Those who keep break them,
Those with perfect awesome manner
And those not perfect,
Those with right views and those with deviant views
The sharp rooted, the dull rooted
I send down equally the Dharma rain
And never grow weary.*

*All living beings
Who hear my Dharma
Receive it according to their power
And dwell on various levels.
They may dwell among humans or gods,
Or Wheel Turning Sage Kings,
Shakra or Brahma Kings:
These are the small herbs.
Those who know the non-outflow Dharma,
Those who can attain Nirvana,
Giving rise to Six Spiritual Penetrations
And attaining the Three Clarities,
Dwelling alone in mountain groves
Ever practicing Ch'an Samadhi
Attaining certification to condition-enlightenment:
Those are the middle-sized herbs.
Those who seek the place of the World Honored One.
Saying, "We will become Buddhas."
Vigorously practicing concentration,
These are the superior herbs.
Further, those disciples of the Buddha
Who turn their minds to the Buddha Way
Always practising compassion
Knowing they will become Buddhas,
For sure, without doubt:
These are called the small trees.
Those who dwell in spiritual penetrations,
Turning the irreversible wheel,
Saving limitless hundreds of thousands
Of millions of living beings -
Such Bodhisattvas as these
Are called great trees.
The Buddha speaks equally,
Like the rain of a single flavor.
According to living beings' natures
They receive it differently,
Just as those herbs and trees
Each receives a different measure.
The Buddha uses this analogy
To instruct expediently.
With various phrases, he
Expounds and proclaims a single Dharma which
In the Buddha's wisdom is
Like a drop within the sea.*

*I send down the rain of Dharma
Filling all the world
The Dharma of one taste is
Cultivated according to their power
Just like those forest groves
All the herbs and trees
According to their size
Grow and flourish well.
The Dharma of all the Buddhas
Is always of a single taste
It causes all the world
To attain perfection.
Through its gradual cultivation
All attain the fruits of the Way.
The Sound Hearers, those enlightened to conditions
Dwelling in mountain groves
Living in their final bodies
Hearing the Dharma gain the fruit;
They are called the herbs.
And each one does grow.
If there are Bodhisattvas,
Whose wisdom is firm and solid,
Who thoroughly comprehend the Three Realms
And seek the supreme vehicle;
They are called small trees,
And each one does grow.
Further, those who dwell in Ch'an
Attaining spiritual powers,
Who hear the Dharma of emptiness
And rejoice within their minds,
Emitting countless lights
Crossing over all beings;
They are called the large trees,
And each one does grow.*

*In this way, Kashyapa,
The Dharma spoken by the Buddha
Is like that great cloud.
With rain of a single flavor,
It moistens all the people and flowers,
So each one bears fruit.
Kashyapa, you should know
That by using causes and conditions
And various analogies
I demonstrate and reveal the Buddha Path.
These are my expedients*

*And other Buddhas are also thus.
Now, for your sakes,
I speak of this true matter:
All of you Sound Hearers,
None of you have reached extinction.
What you now are walking
That is the Bodhisattva Path.
Gradually, gradually, cultivate and study,
And you'll all accomplish Buddhahood.*

CHAPTER SIX

CONFERRING PREDICTIONS

At that time, following his expounding of the verses, the World Honored One spoke to the great assembly in this manner, "My disciple, Mahakashyapa, in a future age will serve and behold three hundred thousand million Buddhas, World Honored Ones, making offerings, paying reverence, venerating and praising them; he will broadly proclaim the limitless Great Dharma of all the Buddhas.

"In his final body he will become a Buddha by the name of Light Brightness. Thus Come One, one worthy of offerings, of proper and universal knowledge, one whose understanding and conduct are complete, a well-gone one who understands the world, an unsurpassed Lord, a taming and regulating hero, a teacher of gods and humans, a Buddha, a World Honored One. His country will be called Light Virtue and his aeon will be called Great Adornment. His lifespan as a Buddha will last for twelve minor aeons. The Proper Dharma will dwell there for twenty minor aeons. The Dharma Resemblance Age will also dwell there for twenty minor aeons.

"His realm will be adorned and free of any filth or evil, tiles or stones, thorns or brambles, excrement or other impurities. The land will be flat, without high or low places, gullies or hills. The land will be made of lapis lazuli, and set about with rows of jeweled trees. The roads will be bordered with golden ropes. Precious flowers will be scattered about, purifying it entirely. The Bodhisattvas in that land will number in the limitless thousands of millions, the assembly of Sound Hearers will be likewise uncountable. No deeds of Mara will be done there, and although Mara and his subjects will exist there, they will all protect the Buddha dharma."

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate this principle, spoke verses saying,

*I declare to the Bhikshus that
By using my Buddha Eye
I see that Kashyapa
In a future age
Countless aeons from now shall become a Buddha
And that in the future he*

*Shall make offerings to, revere and behold
Three hundred ten thousands of millions
of Buddhas, World Honored Ones.
And, for the sake of the Buddha's wisdom
He shall purely cultivate Brahman conduct.
He shall make offerings to the highest
Honored One, doubly complete and then
Cultivate and practice all
Unsurpassed wisdom.
In his final body
He shall become a Buddha.*

*His land will be pure,
With lapis lazuli for soil,
And with many jeweled trees
Lining the roadways,
And with the roads set off by golden cords,
Delighting all who see it.
Fine fragrance will always issue forth,
Rare flowers will be strewn about,
With all manner of rare articles
It shall be adorned.
The land will be flat and even
Without hills or gullies.
The assembly of Bodhisattvas
Will be unreckonable.
Their minds will be gentle
Having gained great spiritual powers;
They will reverently uphold the Buddha's
Great Vehicle sutras.
The assembly of Sound Hearers,
Without outflows, in their last bodies,
Sons of the Dharma King,
Will also be beyond all count.
So that, even with the Heavenly Eye,
Their number shall not be known.*

*His lifespan as a Buddha will be
Twelve minor aeons, and
His Proper Dharma will dwell in the world
Twenty minor aeons.
The Dharmas Image Age will dwell
Also for twenty minor aeons.*

*The World Honored One, Light Brightness
Shall have a history such as this.*

At that time, Mahamaudgalyayana, Subhuti and Mahakatyayana were very agitated. They single-mindedly joined their palms, gazed upward at the World Honored One, not lowering their gaze for a moment, and with a single voice spoke these verses:

*Great, brave hero, the World Honored One,
The Shakyan Dharma King,
Out of pity for us all
Bestow the Buddha Word!*

*If, knowing our profoundest thoughts,
you see that we gain predictions,
It will be like a sprinkling of sweet dew,
Dispelling heat and giving cool refreshment.
It'll be like a person from a famine-stricken land,
who suddenly encounters a royal feast:
His mind holds doubt and fear,
And he doesn't dare go ahead and eat.
But, if he gained the king's permission,
Then he would certainly dare to eat.*

*We, in the same way, ever think
Of the errors of the Small Vehicle
And do not know how we are
To gain the Buddhas unsurpassed wisdom.
Although we hear the Buddha's voice
Saying that we shall become Buddhas,
Our minds hold worry and fear,
Like one who dares not yet to eat.
If we were favored by the Buddha's prediction,
Then we should be happy and at peace.*

*Great, brave hero, World Honored One,
You who always wish peace for the world
Please bestow predictions upon us
Like giving the famished permission to eat!*

At that time, the World Honored One, knowing the thoughts in the minds of his great disciples, told the Bhikshus, "Subhuti will in a future age serve and behold three hundreds of myriads of millions of Nayutas of Buddhas, making offerings, paying reverence, venerating, and praising them, ever cultivating the Brahman conduct, and perfecting the Bodhisattva Way.

"In his final body, he will become a Buddha called Name Appearance Thus Come One, one worthy of offerings, of proper and universal knowledge, one whose understanding and conduct are complete, a well-gone one who understands the world, an unsurpassed lord, a taming and regulating hero, teacher of gods and humans, Buddha, World Honored

One. His aeon will be called Possessing-Jewels. His country will be called Giving Birth to Jewels. His land will be level, with crystal for soil, and jeweled trees for adornments. It will be without hills or gullies, stones, thorns, filth or excrement. Jeweled flowers will cover the ground, purifying it entirely. The people of his land will all dwell on jeweled terraces or in precious, fine towers. The assembly of Sound Hearers will be limitless and boundless, so that they cannot be known by resort to number or analogy. The assembly of Bodhisattvas will number in the countless thousands of myriads of millions of Nayutas. His lifespan as a Buddha will last for twelve minor aeons.

The Proper Dharma will dwell there for twenty minor aeons. The Dharma Image Age will also dwell there for twenty minor aeons. This Buddha will constantly dwell in empty space speaking Dharma for the multitudes and crossing over limitless Bodhisattvas and Sound Hearers."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this principle spoke verses saying,

*Assembled Bhikshus
I shall now tell you,
Listen singlemindedly
To what I'm going to say.
My great disciple,
Subhuti,
Will become a Buddha
Called Name-Appearance.
After making offerings to countless
Myriads of millions of Buddhas
Following the Buddhas' practices,
He will gradually perfect the Great Way.
In his final body he shall
Obtain Thirty-two Marks,
Upright and beautiful
Like a jeweled mountain.*

*His Buddha land will be
Foremost in purity and adornment.
Living beings who see it
All will take delight in it.
And as a Buddha therein
He will save limitless multitudes.
Within his Buddha Dharma
Will be many Bodhisattvas,
All of sharp faculties,
Turning the non-retreating wheel.
This land will ever be
Adorned with Bodhisattvas;*

*The assembly of Sound Hearers
Will be beyond all reckoning.
All having gained the Three Clarities,
And perfected the Six Spiritual Powers
Abiding in the Eight Liberations
And possessing great awesome virtue.
When this Buddha speaks the Dharma
He will manifest limitless
Spiritual powers and transformations,
Inconceivable.
The people, both gods and humans,
Their numbers like the Ganges sands,
All will join their palms
To hear and accept that Buddha's words.
The Buddha's lifespan will be
Twelve minor aeons,
The Proper Dharma will dwell in the world
For twenty minor aeons;
The Dharma Resemblance Age will dwell
For twenty minor aeons, also.*

At that time, the World Honored One further addressed the assembly of Bhikshus saying, "I will now tell you: In a future age, Mahakatyayana will make offerings of various articles to, and will reverently serve eight thousand million Buddhas, honoring and venerating them. After the extinction of those Buddhas, he will erect a stupa for each, one thousand Yojanas in height, five hundred Yojanas in breadth, and made of the seven jewels: gold, silver, lapis lazuli, mother of pearl, carnelian, pearls, and agate. He will make offerings of many flowers, beaded necklaces, paste incense, powdered incense, burning incense, silk canopies and banners to the stupa. After that, he will further make offerings to twenty thousand million Buddhas in the same manner. Having made offerings to those Buddhas, he will perfect the Bodhisattva Way.

"He will then become a Buddha called Jambunada Gold Light Thus Come One, one worthy of offerings, of proper and universal knowledge, one whose understanding and conduct are complete, a well-gone one who understands the world, unsurpassed lord, a taming and regulating hero, teacher of gods and humans, Buddha, World Honored One.

"The land will be flat and even with crystal for soil and jeweled trees as adornments. The roads will be bordered with golden ropes, and the ground covered with fine flowers, purifying it entirely, so that those who see it are delighted. The Four Evil Paths will not exist there, that is, the hells, hungry ghosts, animals, and Asuras. There will be many gods, humans, assembled Sound Hearers and Bodhisattvas who will number in the limitless myriads of millions, and all adorning that land. His lifespan as a Buddha will be twelve minor aeons. His Proper Dharma will dwell in the world twenty minor aeons. The Dharma Resemblance Age will dwell also for twenty minor aeons."

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate this principle spoke verses saying,

*O Bhikshus, all of you,
Listen with a single mind,
For that which I say
Is true, real, and without error.*

*Katyayana, shall
with a variety
Of fine and subtle articles
Make offerings to the Buddhas.
After the extinction of those Buddhas
He will build stupas of the seven jewels
And also, with flowers and incense
Make offerings to their Sharira.*

*In his final body
He will attain the Buddha wisdom
And realize proper enlightenment.*

*His country will be pure
And he will cross over limitless
Myriads of millions of beings;
From the ten directions
He will receive offerings.
His Buddha light
Will be unsurpassed
As a Buddha his name will be
Jambunada Gold Light.
Bodhisattvas, and Sound Hearers
Having severed all existence
Unlimited and innumerable
Will adorn his land.*

At that time, the World Honored One, further spoke to the assembly. "I now tell you that Mahamaudgalyayana will in the future, with various articles, make offerings to eight thousand Buddhas, honoring and venerating them. After the extinction of those Buddhas, he will erect for each of them a stupa one thousand Yojanas in height and five hundred Yojanas in breadth, and made of the seven jewels, gold, silver, lapis lazuli, mother of pearl, carnelian, pearls, and agate. He will make offerings to it of many flowers, beaded necklaces, paste incense, powdered incense, burning incense, silk canopies and banners. After that, he will further make offerings to two hundred myriads of millions of Buddhas in the same manner.

"He will then become a Buddha called Tamalapattracandana Fragrance Thus Come One, one worthy of offerings, of proper and universal knowledge, one whose understanding and conduct are complete, a well-gone one who understands the world, an unsurpassed lord, a taming and regulating hero, teacher of gods and humans, Buddha, World Honored One. His aeon will be called Full of Joy. His country will be called Delighted Mind. His land will be flat and even with crystal for soil, and jeweled trees for adornments. Real pearl flowers will be scattered about, purifying it entirely, so that those who see it rejoice. There will be many gods, humans, Bodhisattvas and Sound Hearers, limitless and uncountable in number. His lifespan as a Buddha will last for twenty-four minor aeons. The Proper Dharma will dwell there for forty minor aeons. The Dharma Resemblance Age will dwell also for forty minor aeons."

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate this principle spoke verses, saying:

*My disciple
Mahamaudgalyayana
Having cast aside this body
Will view eight thousand
Two hundred myriads of millions
Of Buddhas, World Honored Ones.
And, for the sake of the Buddha Way
Will honor and make offerings to them.
In the presence of those Buddhas,
He will always practice Brahman conduct,
Throughout limitless aeons,
Reverently upholding the Buddhadharma.
After the extinction of those Buddhas,
He will build stupas of the seven jewels,
Displaying golden spires
And with flowers, incense, and instrumental music
He will make offerings
To the Buddhas' stupas.*

*Gradually, having perfected
The Bodhisattva Path,
In a land called Delighted Intent,
He will become a Buddha
Called Tamala
Candana Fragrance.
His lifespan as a Buddha will be Twenty-four minor aeons.*

*Always, for gods and humans
He will expound and proclaim the Buddha Way.
There will be limitless Sound Hearers
In number like the Ganges sands,*

*With the Three Clarities and Six Penetrations
And great, awesome virtue.
There will be uncountable Bodhisattvas
Vigorous and solid resolve
And who, with regard to the Buddhas' wisdom
Are irreversible.*

*After that Buddha's extinction
The Proper Dharma will dwell
For Forty minor aeons,
And the Dharma Resemblance Age will be the same.*

*All my disciples
Having perfected their awesome virtue,
All five hundred of them
Shall be given predictions
And in a future age
Will become Buddhas.
Of my own and your former
Causes and conditions
I now will tell:
All of you, listen well!*

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ANALOGY OF THE TRANSFORMED CITY

The Buddha told the Bhikshus, "long ago, past limitless, boundless, unconceivable, Asankheya aeons, there was a Buddha called Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory, Thus Come One, One Worthy of Offerings, One of Proper and Universal Knowledge, One Whose Understanding and Conduct are Complete, Well-Gone One Who Understands the World, Unsurpassed Lord, Taming and Regulating Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, World Honored One. His country was named "Good City", and his aeon was named "Great Mark". O Bhikshus, it has been a great, long time since that Buddha passed into extinction.

Suppose someone were to grind all the earth in the three thousand great thousand worlds into ink powder, and then suppose he passed through a thousand lands to the east and then dropped a particle the size of a mote of dust, and then passing through another thousand lands deposited another mote, and continued to do this until all the ink made of earth was exhausted. What do you think? Could a mathematician or his disciple ever reach the limit of the lands and know their number?

"No, World Honored One."

"O Bhikshus, if the lands this person had passed through, whether or not he set down a particle in them, were all ground into dust, and if each dust mote was equal to an aeon,

then the time since that Buddha passed into extinction would exceed their number by limitless, boundless, hundreds of thousands of tens of thousands of millions of Asankheya aeons.

Using the power of the Thus Come One's knowledge and vision, I behold that time in the distant past as if it were today.

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying,

*"I recall that in a past age,
Limitless, boundless aeons ago,
There was a Buddha, doubly honored,
By the name of Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory.*

*Suppose a person ground
All of the earth that there was
In three thousand great thousand lands
Entirely into ink powder;
And then suppose he passed through a thousand lands,
And then let fall one particle of it,
Continuing to drop particles in this way
Until all the ink particles were gone.
Suppose all of the countries he passed through,
Whether he dropped particles in them or not,
Again were completely ground into dust motes,
And each dust mote were an aeon;
These grains of dust would in number
Be exceeded by the number of aeons
Since that Buddha has passed into extinction;
It has been limitless aeons such as this.*

*The Thus Come One, with unobstructed wisdom,
Knows of that Buddha's extinction,
And of his Sound Hearers and Bodhisattvas,
As if seeing his extinction now.
Bhikshus, you should know
The Buddha's wisdom is pure, subtle, and wondrous;
Without outflows and without obstructions
It penetrates limitless aeons.*

The Buddha told the Bhikshus, "the Buddha Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory had a life-span of five hundred forty myriads of millions of Nayutas of aeons."

When this Buddha was seated on the Bodhimanda, having destroyed the troops of Mara, although he was on the point of attaining Anuttarasamyaksambodhi, still the

Buddhadharmas did not appear before him. So it was for one minor aeon and then onwards to ten minor aeons that he sat in the lotus posture, body and mind unmoving, and yet the Buddhadharmas still did not appear before him. Thereupon, the gods of the Triyastimsha Heaven, spread out for the Buddha, under a Bodhi tree, a lion throne one Yojana in height; on that throne the Buddha was to attain Anuttarasamyaksambodhi. Just as he sat down upon that throne, the kings of the Brahma Heavens rained down heavenly flowers over a distance of one hundred Yojanas. A fragrant wind from time to time swept away the withered flowers as fresh ones rained down. This continued without interruption for a full ten minor aeons as an offering to the Buddha, the rain of these flowers continuing right up until his extinction. In the same way the gods of the four heavenly kings constantly played heavenly drums as an offering to that Buddha and the other gods made heavenly instrumental music for a full ten minor aeons, right up until his extinction.

Bhikshus, the Buddha Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory passed through ten minor aeons before the Buddhadharmas finally manifested before him and he attained Anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

Before that Buddha left home he had sixteen sons, the first of whom was named Accumulation of Knowledge. Each of them had a variety of precious, unusual fine toys. When they heard that their father had realized Anuttarasamyaksambodhi they all cast aside these things they valued and went before the Buddha, escorted by their weeping mothers. Their grandfather, a Wheel Turning Sage King, together with a hundred great ministers and with hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of citizens all surrounded them and accompanied them to the Bodhimanda, all wishing to draw near to the Thus Come One Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory, to make offerings to him, to honor, revere and praise him. When they arrived, they bowed with their head at his feet, and having circumambulated him, they single-mindedly joined their palms, respectively gazed upwards at the World Honored One, and uttered these verses:

*World Honored One of great and awesome virtue,
For the sake of crossing over living beings
After limitless millions of aeons,
You accomplished Buddhahood,
And perfected all your vows;
Unsurpassed is our good fortune.
Very rare you are, World Honored One,
In one sitting, passing through ten minor aeons,
With body, hands and feet,
Still, secure, and unmoving.
Your mind, ever tranquil,
Never knows distraction.
Ultimate, your eternal extinction,
As you dwell firmly in the non-outflow Dharma.
Now we see the World Honored One
Serenely realize the Buddha Path;
We all gain good benefit*

*And proclaim our delight and great joy.
Living beings, ever tormented by suffering,
Blind, and without a guide,
Fail to recognize the path which ends that pain,
And do not know to seek their liberation.
During the long night the evil destinies increase,
While the hosts of gods are reduced in number;
From darkness they proceed into darkness,
Never hearing the Buddha's name.
Now, the Buddha's gained the utmost
Peace, rest, the non-outflow way;
And we, and all of the gods,
To attain the greatest benefit
Therefore bow our heads
And return our lives to the Unsurpassed Honored One.*

When the sixteen sons had finished praising the Buddha, they then entreated him to turn the Dharma wheel, saying, "World Honored One, speak the Dharma and bring us peace show us pity, and benefit both gods and humans." Then they spoke more verses saying:

*"O Hero of the World, incomparable
Adorned with a hundred blessings,
And having attained unsurpassed wisdom,
Pray speak for the sake of this world
To cross over and liberate us and
All classes of living beings as well.
Demonstrate it: speak it in detail
and lead us to attain that wisdom,
For, if we can attain Buddhahood,
Other living beings can do the same.
The World Honored One knows the profound thoughts
Within the minds of living beings;
He knows the ways on which they walk
And the strength of their wisdom,
The pleasures and the blessings they have cultivated,
And all the deeds done in former lives.
The World Honored One, knowing all of this,
Should turn the unsurpassed wheel!"*

The Buddha, Shakyamuni, told the Bhikshus, "When the Buddha Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory attained Anuttarasamyaksambodhi, in each of the ten directions, five hundred myriads of millions of Buddha worlds quaked in six ways. The dark recesses between those lands that the awesome light of the sun and moon could not illumine then were brightly lit, and the living beings therein were able to see one another. They all said 'where have all these living beings come from?' Further, in those lands, all the heavenly

palaces, up to the Brahma palaces, quaked in six ways. A great light shone everywhere, illumining the entire universe and surpassing the light of the heavens."

At that time, in five hundred myriads of millions of lands to the east, the Brahma Heaven palaces shone with a light twice that of their usual brightness. Each of the Brahma Heaven Kings had this thought, "now the palaces are brighter than ever before. What is the reason for this manifestation?"

Then, the Brahma Heaven Kings visited one another and discussed this matter. In the assembly there was one great Brahma Heaven King by the name of Rescuing All, who on behalf of the Brahma hosts spoke verses, saying,

*All of our palaces
Are bright as never before;
What is the reason for this?
Let us seek it together.
Is it because a great and virtuous god had been born?
Or because a Buddha has appeared in the world
That this great light
Shines throughout the ten directions?*

At that time, the Brahma Heaven Kings from five hundred myriads of millions of lands, together with their palaces, each with sacks filled with heavenly flowers, went to the west to seek out this manifestation. They saw the Thus Come One Great-Penetrating-Wisdom Victory seated on the lion throne beneath the Bodhi tree in the Bodhimanda, revered and circumambulated by gods, dragon kings, Gandharvas, Kinnaras, Mahoragas, and beings both human and non-human. They saw as well the sixteen sons of the king requesting the Buddha to turn the Dharma Wheel.

Then, the Brahma Heaven Kings bowed with their heads at the Buddha's feet, circumambulated him a hundred thousand times, and scattered heavenly flowers upon him. The flowers were piled as high as Mount Sumeru, and they offered them as well to the Buddha's Bodhi tree, which was ten Yojanas in height. Having made offerings of flowers, each presented his palace to the Buddha, saying, 'pray show us pity, and benefit us by accepting and occupying these palaces that we offer you!'

Then the Brahma Heaven Kings, in front of the Buddha, with a single mind and the same voice, spoke verses in praise, saying:

*"World Honored One, you are very rare,
And difficult to encounter;
Complete with limitless meritorious virtues,
You are able to rescue and protect all creatures.
Great teacher of gods and humans,*

*You who pity all the world
All beings in the ten directions
Receive your beneficence.
We have come from
Five hundred myriads of millions of lands,
Setting aside the bliss of deep Dhyana samadhi,
For the sake of making offerings to the Buddha.
Blessings we've gained in former lives
Well ornament our palaces.
Now we offer them to the World Honored One,
Only praying you will show mercy and accept them.*

At that time, the Brahma Heaven Kings, having praised the Buddha, said "We only pray that the World Honored One will turn the Dharma wheel, crossing over living beings, opening up the way to Nirvana." Then; all the Brahma Heaven Kings with one mind and the same voice, proclaimed these verses:

*"Hero of the World, doubly perfect honored one,
We only pray that you will expound and proclaim the Dharma,
And through the power of your great compassion and pity
Cross over suffering and tormented living beings.*

Thereupon, the Thus Come One Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory, assented by his silence.

Furthermore, O Bhikshus, to the southeast the great Brahma Kings in five hundred myriads of millions of lands, seeing their palaces in dazzling brilliance as never before, jumped for joy, thinking it rare indeed.

They visited one another and discussed this matter. Then, in the assembly, a Brahma Heaven King by the name of Great Compassion, on behalf of the Brahma hosts spoke these verses:

*"What is the reason for this event?
Why has this sign appeared?
All of our palaces
Are aglow as never before.
Has a greatly virtuous god been born?
Or has a Buddha appeared in the world?
We have never seen such signs before.
With one mind we should investigate it,
Passing through a thousand myriads of millions of lands,
Searching for the light, investigating it together.
It must be that a Buddha has appeared
To take across the suffering living beings.*

At that time, five hundred myriads of millions of Brahma Heaven Kings, together with their palaces, each with sacks filled with heavenly flowers, went to the southwest to seek out this manifestation. They saw the Thus Come One Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory seated on the lion throne beneath the Bodhi tree in the Bodhimanda, revered and circumambulated by gods, dragon kings, Grandharvas, Kinnaras, Mahoragas, and beings both human and non-human. They saw, as well, the sixteen sons of the king requesting the Buddha to turn the Dharma wheel.

Then the Brahma Heaven kings bowed with their heads at the Buddha's feet, circumambulated him a hundred thousand times, then scattered heavenly flowers upon him. The flowers were piled as high as Mount Sumeru, and they offered them as well to the Buddha's Bodhi tree. Having made offerings of flowers, each presented his palace to the Buddha saying, "Show us pity and benefit us by accepting and occupying these palaces that we offer you!" Then the Buddha, with a single mind and the same voice, spoke verses in praise, saying,

*"Sagely Lord, king among gods,
With the kalavinka sound,
To you who pity living beings,
We now reverently bow.
The World Honored One is most rare,
Appearing but once in long ages.
One hundred and eighty aeons have passed
Empty, without a Buddha.
The three evil paths are full.
The hosts of gods decrease.
Now the Buddha has appeared in the world.
To act as eyes for living beings,
As a refuge for the world,
Rescuing and protecting all creatures,
A father for all beings,
Pitying and benefitting them.
Now, through blessings gained in former lives,
We are enabled to meet the World Honored One.*

At that time, the Brahma Heaven Gods, having praised the Buddha, said, "We only pray that the World Honored One will take pity on all beings and turn the Dharma wheel to liberate living beings."

Then, the Brahma Heaven Kings, with one mind and a single voice, spoke verses saying,

*"Great Sage, turn the Dharma wheel,
To reveal the marks of all Dharmas,
To cross over tormented living beings,
So they may gain great joy.
When living beings hear the Dharma,*

*They may gain the way, or be reborn in the heavens;
The evil paths will decrease
And those of patience and goodness will increase.*

At that time, the Thus Come One Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory assented by his silence.

Furthermore, O Bhikshus, to the south, the great Brahma Kings in five hundred myriads of millions of Buddhalands, seeing their palaces in dazzling brilliance as never seen before, jumped for joy, thinking it rare indeed.

Thereupon, they visited one another and discussed this matter, wondering, "why do our palaces glow with the light?" Then, in the assembly a Brahma Heaven King called Wonderful Dharma, on behalf of the Brahma hosts, spoke these verses,

*"All of our palaces
Shine with awesome brilliance;
This cannot be for no reason;
We should seek out this sign.
In a hundred thousand aeons,
Such a sign has never been seen.
Has a great and virtuous god been born?
Or has a Buddha appeared in the world?"*

At that time, five hundred myriads of millions of Brahma Heaven Kings, together with their palaces, each with sacks filled with heavenly flowers, went to the north to seek out this manifestation. They saw the Thus Come One Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory seated on the lion throne beneath the Bodhi tree in the Bodhimanda, revered and circumambulated by gods, Dragon Kings, Gandharvas, Kinnaras, Mahoragas, and beings both human and non-human. They saw as well, the sixteen sons of the king requesting the Buddha to turn the Dharma wheel.

Then the Brahma Heaven Kings bowed with their heads at the Buddha's feet, circumambulated him a hundred thousand times and scattered heavenly flowers upon him. The flowers were piled as high as Mount Sumeru, and they offered them, as well to the Buddha's Bodhi tree. Having made offerings of flowers, each presented his palace to the Buddha, saying, "Show us pity and benefit us by accepting and occupying these palaces that we offer you." Then the Brahma Heaven Kings, before the Buddha, with a single mind and the same voice, spoke verses in praise, saying,

*"The World Honored One is very hard to meet;
He who breaks through all afflictions.
Passing through a hundred and thirty aeons,
Only now do we get to see him.
May living beings, starving and thirsty,
Be filled with the rain of Dharma.*

*He, whom we have never seen before,
One of unlimited wisdom,
Rare as the Udumbara blossom
Today, at last we have met.
All of our palaces
Receiving your light, are adorned.
In your great compassion, World Honored One
Pray accept and live with them."*

At that time, the Brahma Heaven Kings, having praised the Buddha, said "we only pray that the World Honored One will turn the Dharma wheel, causing the entire world with its gods, Maras, Brahmans, Shramanas, all to become peaceful and calm and to attain liberation." Then, the Brahma Heaven Kings, with a single mind and the same voice, spoke verses in praise, saying,

*"Honored One among gods and humans,
Pray turn the unsurpassed wheel of Dharma.
Beat upon the Dharma drum,
And blow the great Dharma conch,
Let fall everywhere the great Dharma rain,
To cross over limitless living beings.
We all beseech you to expound and proclaim
The profound, far reaching sound.*

Thereupon, the Thus Come One Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory assented by his silence.

And so it was in all directions from the southwest to the lower direction.

Then, five hundred myriads of millions of great Brahma Kings in the upper directions, seeing the palaces they rested in shining with awesome brilliance as never before jumped for joy, thinking it rare indeed.

They visited one another and discussed this matter, wondering, "why do our palaces shine with this bright light?"

Then, in the assembly, a Brahma Heaven King by the name of Shikhin, on behalf of the Brahma hosts, spoke verses, saying,

*Now, for what reason
Do our palaces shine
With such an awesome light
Adorned as never before.'
Wondrous marks, such as these
We have never seen before*

*Has a great and virtuous god been born?
Has a Buddha appeared in the world?*

At that time, five hundred myriads of millions of Brahma Heaven Kings, together with their palaces, each with sacks filled with heavenly flowers, went to the lower direction to seek out this sign. They saw the Thus Come One Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory seated on the lion throne beneath the Bodhi tree in the Bodhimanda, revered and circumambulated by gods, Dragon Kings, Gradharvas, Kinnaras, Mahoragas, and beings both human and non-human. They saw, as well, the sixteen sons of the king requesting the Buddha to turn the Dharma wheel.

Then, the Brahma Heaven Kings bowed with their heads at the Buddha's feet, circumambulated him a hundred thousand times, and scattered heavenly flowers upon the Buddha. The flowers that they scattered were as high as a Mount Sumeru, and they offered them as well to the Buddha's Bodhi tree. Having made offerings of flowers, they each presented their palace as an offering to the Buddha, saying, "We only pray that you will show us pity and benefit us by accepting and occupying these palaces." Then the Brahma Heaven Kings, before the Buddha, with one mind and a single voice, spoke these verses:

*"It's good indeed to see the Buddhas,
Honored Sages who save the world
And who, from the prison of the Three Realm
Can affect escape for living beings,
All-wise, revered by gods and humans,
Pitying the flocks of beings
Opening the door of sweet dew,
Vastly saving all beings.
Limitless aeons of yore
Have passed emptily, without a Buddha.
Before the World Honored One emerged,
The ten directions were ever in darkness,
The Three Evil Paths increased,
And the Asuras flourished,
While the hosts of gods diminished,
Most falling into evil paths at death.
They did not hear the Dharma from the Buddha,
But ever followed unwholesome paths.
Their bodily strength and wisdom,
Both decreased.
Because of offense Karma
They lost joy and thoughts of joy.
They dwelt in Dharmas of deviant views,
Not knowing the rules of goodness.
Failing to receive the Buddha's transforming,
They constantly fell into evil paths.*

*The Buddha acts as eyes for all the world,
And but once in a long while does appear.
Out of pity for living beings,
He manifests in the world,
Transcends it and realizes right enlightenment.
We rejoice exceedingly;
We and all the other beings,
Are happy as never before,
And all of our palaces
Receive the light and are adorned.
We now offer them to the World Honored One.
May we pity us and accept them.
We vow that this merit and virtue
May extend to all living beings,
So that we and all beings
May together realize the Buddha Way.*

At that time, the five hundred myriads of millions of Brahma Heaven Gods, having praised the Buddha in verse, addressed the Buddha, saying, "We only pray that the World Honored One will turn the Dharma Wheel to bring tranquility and liberation to many beings." Then, the Brahma Heaven King spoke these verses of praise:

*"World Honored One, turn the Dharma Wheel
Sound the sweet dew Dharma-drum,
To cross over tormented living beings,
Showing them Nirvana's path.
Pray, accept our request,
And, with the great and subtle sound,
Pity us, and set forth,
Dharma gathered through countless aeons.*

At that time, the Thus Come One Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory, having received the request of the Brahma Heaven Kings of the ten directions, as well as the sixteen princes. Thereupon, three times turned the Dharma Wheel of twelve parts which cannot be turned by Shramanas, Brahmans, Gods, Maras, Brahmas, or other beings of the world. He said, "This is suffering. This is the origination of suffering. This is the extinction of suffering. This the way to the extinction of suffering.

And he extensively set forth the Dharma of the twelve causes and conditions: ignorance conditions dispositions. Dispositions condition consciousness. Consciousness conditions name and form. Name and form condition the six sense organs. The six sense organs condition contact. Contact conditions feeling. Feeling conditions craving. Craving conditions grasping. Grasping conditions becoming. Becoming conditions birth. Birth conditions old age and death, worry, grief, suffering and distress. When ignorance is extinguished, dispositions are extinguished. When dispositions are extinguished, then consciousness is extinguished. When consciousness is extinguished, then name and form

are extinguished. When name and form are extinguished, then the six sense organs are extinguished, then contact is extinguished. When contact is extinguished, then feeling is extinguished. When feeling is extinguished, then craving is extinguished. When craving is extinguished, then grasping is extinguished. When grasping is extinguished, then becoming is extinguished. When becoming is extinguished, then birth is extinguished. When birth is extinguished, then old age and death, worry, grief, suffering and distress are extinguished.

When the Buddha spoke this Dharma, amidst the great assembly of gods and humans, six hundred myriads of millions of Nayutas human beings, because they did not grasp at any Dharmas, had their minds liberated from all outflows. All attained profound and subtle Dhyana concentration, the Three Clarities, the Six Penetrations, and perfected the Eight Liberations. The second, third, and fourth times he set forth this Dharma, thousands of millions of Nayutas of living beings, their numbers like the Ganges' sand, also because they did not grasp at any Dharmas, had their minds liberated from outflows. From that time onwards, the assembly of Sound Hearers was unlimited, boundless, and unreckonable.

At that time the sixteen princes all left home as virgin youths and became Shramaneras. They all possessed sharp faculties and clear wisdom. They had already made offerings to hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of Buddhas, purely cultivating Brahman conduct, seeking Anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

They all spoke to the Buddha, saying, "World Honored One, all these limitless thousands of myriads of millions of greatly virtuous Sound Hearers already have reached accomplishment. World Honored One, you should, for our sakes, also, speak the Dharma of Anuttarasamyaksambodhi. Having heard it, we will all cultivate and study it. World Honored One, we all aspire to the Thus Come One's knowledge and vision. As to the thoughts deep within our minds, the Buddha himself knows."

Then, the multitudes, led by the Wheel Turning Sage King, eighty thousand million of them, upon seeing the sixteen princes leave home, also sought to leave home, and the king permitted them to do so.

At that time, the Buddha, having received the request of the sixteen Shramaneras, after twenty thousand aeons, then at last, amidst the four-fold assembly, spoke the Great Vehicle sutra by the name of the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower, a Dharma for instructing Bodhisattvas of whom the Buddha is protective and mindful. After he spoke the Sutra, the sixteen Shramaneras, for the sake of Anuttarasamyaksambodhi, all received, upheld and recited it and keenly penetrated its meaning.

When the Sutra was spoken, the sixteen Bodhisattva Shramaneras all received it with faith. Among the host of Sound Hearers, too, there were those who had faith in it and understood it. The remaining thousands of myriads of millions of living beings, however, all gave rise to doubts.

The Buddha spoke this Sutra for eighty thousand aeons without cessation.

When he had finished speaking the Sutra, he entered a quiet room where he remained in Dhyana Samadhi for eighty-four thousand aeons.

Then the sixteen Bodhisattva Shramaneras, knowing that the Buddha had entered his room and was silently absorbed in Dhyana Samadhi, each ascended the Dharma seat. For a period of eighty-four thousand aeons, for the sake of the four-fold assembly, they spoke the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra extensively and in detail. Each one of them crossed over six hundred myriads of millions of Nayutas of Ganges' sands of living beings, instructing them with the teaching, benefitting them, making them rejoice and causing them to bring forth the thought of Anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

After eighty-four thousand aeons had passed, the Buddha Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory arose from Samadhi, approached the Dharma throne and serenely sat down upon it. He addressed the great assembly, saying, "These sixteen Bodhisattva Shramaneras are very rare. All their faculties are keen and their wisdom is clear. They have in the past already made offerings to limitless thousands of myriads of millions of Buddhas. In the presence of those Buddhas, they constantly cultivated Brahman conduct, accepting and upholding the Buddha's wisdom, instructing living beings and causing them to enter into it.

"You should all make a point of drawing near to and making offerings to them. Why? Those Sound Hearers, Pratyeka Buddhas, or Bodhisattvas who can have faith in the Dharma of the Sutra spoken by these sixteen Bodhisattvas, accept and uphold it without defaming it, will all attain Anuttarasamyaksambodhi, that is, the wisdom of the Thus Come One."

The Buddha told the Bhikshus, "These sixteen Bodhisattvas always delight in speaking the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra. Each Bodhisattva has transformed six hundred myriads of millions of Nayutas of Ganges' sands of living beings who, life after life were born together with the Bodhisattvas and heard the Dharma from them, fully believing and understanding it. For this reason, they have met up with forty thousand millions of Buddhas, World Honored Ones and to this moment have not stopped doing so.

"Bhikshus, I will tell you, those disciples of the Buddha, the sixteen Shramaneras, have all now attained Anuttarasamyaksambodhi, and in the lands of the ten directions, are presently speaking the Dharma. They have as their retinues limitless hundreds of thousands of millions of Bodhisattvas and Sound Hearers. Two have become Buddhas in the East: One is named Akshobhya, in the Land of Happiness. The other is named Sumeru Peak. Two have become Buddhas in the Southeast: One is named Lion Sound. The other is named Lion Sign. Two have become Buddhas in the South: One is named Space Dweller. The other is named Eternal Extinction. Two have become Buddhas in the Southwest: One is named Royal Sign. The other is named Brahma Sign. Two have become Buddhas in the West: One is named Amitayus. The other is named Savior of all

Worlds from Suffering and Anguish. Two have become Buddhas in the Northwest. One is named Tamalapa-trachandana Fragrance and Spiritual Penetrations. The other is named Sumeru Sign. Two have become Buddhas in the North. One is named Cloud Self-Mastery. The other is named King of Cloud Self-Mastery. In the Northeast there is a Buddha by the name of Destroyer of All Worldly Fear. The other Buddha, the sixteenth, is myself, Shakyamuni Buddha, here in the Saha World, where I have realized Anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

"Bhikshus, we, are Shramaneras each taught and transformed limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of Ganges' sands of living beings, who, hearing the Dharma from us, were set towards Anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

"Of these living beings, there are those who dwell at the level of Sound Hearers. I constantly instruct and transform them in Anuttarasamyaksambodhi. All these people will, by means of this Dharma, gradually enter the Buddha Path. Why? The Thus Come One's wisdom is hard to believe and hard to understand.

"The living beings, limitless as Ganges' sands, who I transformed at that time are you, yourselves, Bhikshus, and are also those who will be Sound Hearer disciples in the future, after my extinction.

"After my extinction, furthermore, there will be disciples who will not hear this Sutra, who will not know or be aware of the Bodhisattva conduct, but who will through the attainment of their own merit and virtue give rise to the thought of extinction and who will enter Nirvana. I shall be a Buddha in another land, with another name. Although these people will have produced the thought of extinction and enter into Nirvana, they will, in those lands, seek the Buddha's wisdom and get to hear this Sutra and that it is only by means of the Buddha-vehicle that extinction can be attained. There are no other vehicles, except for those expedient devices taught by other Thus Come Ones.

"Bhikshus, when the Thus Come One knows of himself, that the time of his Nirvana has come, that the assembly is pure, that their faith and understanding are solid and firm, that they fully comprehend the Dharma emptiness and have deeply entered into Dhyana Samadhi, he will gather together the host of Bodhisattvas and Sound Hearers and speak this Sutra for them, saying, 'there are not two vehicles by which extinction is attained. There is only the One Buddha Vehicle by which extinction can be attained.'

"Bhikshus, you should know, the expedients of the Thus Come deeply enter the natures of living beings. Knowing that they aspire to and are content with lesser Dharmas and are deeply attached to the Five Desires, he speaks to them of Nirvana. When they hear him, then they immediately believe and accept it.

"It is as if, for example, there is a road, five hundred Yojanas long, steep dangerous and bad, an uninhabited and terrifying place. A large group of people wish to travel this road to reach a cache of precious jewels. Among them, there is a guide, intelligent, wise and

clear-headed, who knows the road well, both its passable and impassable features. And who wishes to lead the group through this hardship.

"Midway, the group he is leading grows weary and wishes to turn back. They say to the guide, 'We are exhausted and afraid. We cannot go forward. Its too far. We want to turn back now.'

"Their leader, who has many expedients, has this thought; 'How pitiful they are. How can they renounce the great and precious treasure and wish to turn back?' Having had this thought, through the power of his expedient devices, he transforms a city in the center of the dangerous road, three hundred Yojanas in extent, and says to them, 'Do not be afraid. Do not turn back; stay here now in this great city I have created just for you. If you go into this city, you will be happy and at peace. If you then wish to proceed to the jewel cache, you may do so.'

"Then the exhausted group rejoiced greatly, having gained what they had never had. 'We have now escaped this bad road and gained happiness and peace.' Then the group went forward and entered the transformed city; thinking that they had already been saved, they felt happy and at peace.

"At that time, the guide, knowing that they were rested and no longer weary, made the city disappear, saying to them, 'All of you, come, let us go. The jewel cache is near. The great city was merely something I created from transformation to give you a rest.'

"Bhikshus, the Thus Come One is also like this. He now acts as a great guide for all of you. He knows that living beings should leave and cross over the evil road of the torments of birth and death which is so steep, difficult and long.

If living beings only hear of the One Buddha Vehicle, they will not wish to see the Buddha or to draw near to him. Instead, they will think, 'the Buddha path is long and far; it can only be accomplished after much labor and suffering.' The Buddha knows their minds to be weak and lowly. When they are half-way there, he uses the power of expedients to speak of the two Nirvanas in order to give them a rest. If living beings dwell on these two levels, the Thus Come One then tells them, 'You have not yet finished your job. The level you are dwelling at is near the Buddhas' wisdom. You should observe and ponder this: the Nirvana you have attained is not the real one. The Thus Come One has but used the power of his expedients and, within the One Buddha Vehicle, discriminated and spoken of three.'

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses saying,

*The Buddha Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory
Sat in the Bodhimanda for ten aeons,
Without the manifestation of the Buddha Dharmas,
And he did not realize the Buddha Way.*

*Heavenly spirits and Dragon Kings,
And the host of Asuras,
Consantly rained down heavenly flowers,
As an offering to that Buddha.
The Gods beat upon their heavenly drums
And made all kinds of music;
Fragrant breezes blew away the withered flowers
And fine, new ones rained down.
When ten aeons had passed,
He then realized the Buddha Way.
All the gods and humans,
Danced for the joy within their minds.
The sixteen sons of that Buddha
As well as their retinues,
Thousands of millions surrounding them,
All went before that Buddha.
They bowed with their heads at his feet
"May the sagely lion's Dharma rain
Fill us and everyone!"*

*A World Honored One is very hard to encounter,
Appearing but once in a long time.
In order to awaken all creatures,
He shakes all things.*

*In five hundred myriads of millions of lands,
In worlds in the eastern direction,
Brahma palaces shone with a light
Such as they never had before.
The Brahmas, seeing these signs,
Followed them to the Buddha;
They scattered flowers as an offering,
And offered up their palaces,
Asking the Buddha to turn the Dharma wheel,
With verses in his praise.
The Buddha knew the time had not yet come
And received their request seated in silence.
From the other three directions, and four points between,
And, likewise, from above, and below,
They scattered flowers and offered their palaces,
Asking the Buddha to turn the Dharma wheel:
"The World Honored One is very hard to meet;
We pray that through his great compassion and pity.
He will open wide the sweet dew door
And turn the supreme Dharma wheel."*

*The World Honored One, having limitless wisdom,
Received the multitude's request
And proclaimed various Dharmas for their sakes.
The Four Truths, the Twelve Conditions,
From ignorance up to old age and death -
All arise because of birth.
In this way the host of calamities comes to be;
You should all know this.
When he expounded on this Dharma
Six hundred myriads of millions of billions
Exhausted the limits of all suffering
And all became Arhats.
When he spoke the Dharma the second time,
Hosts like the sands of a thousand myriads of Ganges Rivers
Their minds grasping no Dharmas,
Also attained Arhatship.
After that, those who gained the Way,
Were incalculable in number;
Were one to count through myriads of millions of aeons.
One could not reach their limit.*

*At that time, the sixteen princes,
Left home and became Shramaneras.
Together they requested that the Buddha
Extensively proclaim the Dharma of the Great Vehicle:
"May we and our followers
All perfect the Buddha Way.
We wish to become like the World Honored One,
With the wisdom eye and foremost purity."
The Buddha, knowing the intentions of the youths,
Their practices in former lives,
Used limitless causes and conditions
And various analogies,
To teach them the Six Paramitas,
As well as matters of spiritual penetrations.
He discriminated the real Dharma,
And the pathway walked by the Bodhisattvas.
He spoke The Dharma Flower Sutra
Its verses in numbers like Gange's sands.
After that Buddha had spoken the Sutra
In a quiet room he entered Dyhana Samadhi
Single-mindedly sitting in one place,
For eighty-four thousand aeons.*

*All the Shramaneras,
Knowing the Buddha had not yet left Dhyana,*

*For the sake of the limitless millions assembled,
Spoke of the Buddha's unsurpassed wisdom.
Each seated on his Dharma throne,
Spoke this Great Vehicle Sutra.
After the Buddha had become peacefully still,
They propagated and taught the Dharma.
Each one of the Shramaneras
Took across living beings
To the number of grains of sand
In six hundred myriads of Ganges rivers.*

*After that Buddha had crossed over into extinction,
All those who heard the Dharma,
In whatever Buddhalands they might be,
Were reborn there together with their teachers.*

*The sixteen Shramaneras
Perfectly practiced the Buddha Path.
Presently in the ten directions
Each has realized proper enlightenment.
Those who heard the Dharma then,
Are each in the presence of a Buddha;
Those who are Sound Hearers,
Are gradually taught the Buddha Path.
I was one of the sixteen;
In the past, I taught all of you.
I therefore use expedients
To draw you into the Buddha's wisdom.*

*Through these former causal conditions,
I presently speak The Dharma Flower Sutra,
Leading you to enter the Buddha Path.
Take care not to become frightened.*

*Suppose there is a steep and bad road,
Remote and teeming with venomous beasts,
Lacking, as well as, water or grass
- A place feared by all.
Countless thousands of myriads
Wish to traverse this dangerous road
With its pathways so distant,
Extending five hundred Yojanas.
There is among them a guide,
Intelligent and wise,
Clear and resolute in mind,
Who can rescue them from their difficulty.*

*The group grows weary
And says to the guide,
"We are all exhausted, now
And want to turn back."*

*The guide thinks to himself,
"How very pitiful they are.
How can they wish to turn back
and lose the great and precious treasure?"
Instantly he thinks of a device:
Using the power of spiritual penetrations
He conjures up a great city
Adorned with houses,
Surrounded by gardens and groves,
Brooks and bathing ponds,
Layered gates and tiered pavilions,
Filled with men and women.
After creating this,
He pities them saying, "Do not be afraid.
But go into this city
And enjoy yourselves as you wish."*

*When they had entered the city,
They rejoiced greatly at heart
Thinking they were safe and sound,
And that they had been saved.*

*The guide, knowing they were rested,
Assembled them together and said,
"You should all go forward,
For this is nothing but a transformed city.
Seeing that you were exhausted
And wanted to turn back midway,
I used the power of expedients,
To transform provisionally this city.
You should now be vigorous
And proceed to the jewel cache."*

*I, too, am like this,
I am the guide of all;*

*Seeing those who seek the way,
Exhausted in mid-course
Unable to cross the dangerous paths,
Of birth, death and affliction,
Therefore, I use the power of expedients,*

*To speak of Nirvana and give them a rest,
Saying, "Your sufferings are ended.
You have done what you had to do.
Then, knowing they have reached Nirvana,
And had all become Arhats,
I gather them together,
To teach them the genuine Dharma.
The Buddhas use the power of expedients,
To discriminate and speak of Three Vehicles
But there is only the One Buddha Vehicle.
The other two were spoken as a resting place.
What I am telling you now is the truth;
What you have gained is not extinction.
For the sake of the Buddha's all wisdom,
You should exert yourselves with great vigor.
When you have certified to all wisdom,
And have the Ten Powers and other Buddha Dharmas
And have perfected the Thirty-two Marks,
Then that is genuine extinction.*

*The Buddhas, the guiding masters,
Speak of Nirvana to give living beings rest,
But once they know that they are rested,
They lead them into the Buddhas' wisdom.*

*Verse in Summary
Moistening all the three dispositions
The disciples receive the (Buddha's) kindness;
But the transformed city is falsely created and is not real.
One takes another look at the causes behind
(the Buddha Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory.)
So the sixteen grandsons,
In the eight directions, certify to a golden body.
Homage to the Dharma Flower Assembly of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
Homage to the Dharma Flower Assembly of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
Homage to the Dharma Flower Assembly of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.*

CHAPTER EIGHT

FIVE HUNDRED DISCIPLES RECEIVE PREDICTIONS

At that time Purnamaitreyaniputra, having heard about wisdom and the expedients from the Buddha who speaks of Dharma in accord with what is appropriate, having heard all the great disciples receive predictions of Annuttarasamyaksambodhi, and in addition having heard of the matters of causes and conditions of former lives, and furthermore, having heard of the Buddha's great comfort and the power of his spiritual penetrations obtained what he had never had. His mind was purified and he rejoiced.

Thereupon, he rose from his seat, bowed with his head at the Buddha's feet, and withdrew to one side, gazing unblinkingly at the honored one's countenance.

He then thought, "the World Honored One is most unique. His deeds are rare. He accords with all the various dispositions of beings in the world; employing expedient devices with knowledge and vision, he speaks the Dharma for them, releasing them from various types of greed and attachment. We could never fully express in words the merit and virtue of the Buddha. Only the Buddha, the World Honored One can know our deepest thoughts and past vows."

At that time, the Buddha told the Bhikshus, "Do you see this Purnamaitreyaniputra? I constantly praise him as being foremost of those who speak the Dharma, and I extol his various meritorious qualities, his vigorous and diligent support in helping to proclaim my Dharma. In the midst of the four-fold assembly, he can demonstrate the teaching to the delight and advantage of all. He perfectly interprets the Proper Dharma of the Buddha, greatly benefitting his fellow practitioners of Brahman conduct. Except for the Thus Come One, no one can fully appreciate his eloquence in discussion.

"You should not say that Purnamaitreyaniputra is only able to protect, support, and help propagate my Dharma alone. He has also, in the presence of ninety million Buddhas of the past, protected, supported, and helped to propagate those Buddhas' Proper Dharma, being foremost among the speakers of Dharma.

"Further, he has thoroughly understood the Dharma of emptiness taught by those Buddhas, and gained the Four Unobstructed Wisdoms. He is always able to speak the Dharma, purely and precisely, without doubts. He has perfected the power of the Bodhisattva's spiritual penetrations. Throughout his entire life, he has cultivated Brahman conduct. The Buddhas' contemporaries all spoke of him as actually a Sound Hearer, but this was just an expedient device he used in order to benefit limitless hundreds of thousands of living beings. He further transformed limitless Asankhyeyas of people, causing them to stand in Anuttarasamyaksambodhi.. In order to purify the Buddhalands, he constantly performs the Buddha's work in teaching and transforming living beings.

"O Bhikshus, Purnamaitreyaniputra has been the foremost speaker of the Dharma for the past seven Buddhas, and he is also foremost speaker of Dharma under me. He will also be the foremost speaker of Dharma under all the Buddhas to come in the worthy Kalpa, for whom he will protect, uphold and help in propagating the Buddhadharma. He shall also protect, uphold and help the Dharma of limitless, boundless numbers of future Buddhas, teaching, transforming and benefitting limitless living beings, causing them to stand in Anuttarasamyaksambodhi. In order to purify the Buddhalands, he will be ever vigorous and diligent in teaching and transforming living beings.

"He will gradually perfect the Bodhisattva Path, and after limitless Asankhyeya aeons he will in this land attain Anuttarasamyaksambodhi. His name will be Dharma-Brightness-Thus-Come-One, one Worthy of Offerings, one of Proper and Universal Knowledge, one

of Perfect Clarity and Conduct, Well Gone one who Understands the World, Supreme Lord, A Hero Who Subdues and Tames, A Teacher of Gods and Humans, The Buddha, The World Honored One.

"This Buddha shall take great trichiliocosms as many as the sands in the Ganges river as his Buddhaland, with the seven jewels for earth. The land will be as level as the palm of one's hand. It shall have no mountains, or hills, gorges, gullys or ditches. It will be filled with pavilions and palaces of the seven jewels. The palaces of the gods will be located in space nearby so the humans and gods may consort and see one another.

"There will be no evil paths and no women. All the living beings will be born by transformation and have no sexual desire.

"They will obtain great spiritual penetrations. Their bodies will emit light, and they will be able to fly at will. Their resolve will be solid. They will be vigorous and wise. They all will be golden colored, and adorned with the Thirty-two Marks. The living beings in that land will always take two kinds of food: The first, the food of Dharma-joy and the second, the food of Dhyana-happiness.

"The host of Bodhisattvas will number in the limitless Asankhyeyas of thousands of myriads of millions of Nayutas. They will attain great spiritual penetrations and the Four Unobstructed Wisdoms, they will be skilled at teaching and transforming all kinds of living beings. The host of Sound Hearers will be uncountable and unreckonable in number. All will perfect the Six Penetrations, the Three Clarities and the Eight Liberations.

"The realization of this Buddhaland will be thus adorned with limitless meritorious virtues.

"The aeon will be named "Jeweled Brightness." The country will be named "Well-Purified."

"The lifespan of that Buddha will be limitless Asankhyeya aeons and his Dharma will abide for a very long time.

"After that Buddha's extinction, stupas of the seven jewels will be built everywhere in that land."

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses saying,

*All of you Bhikshus listen well,
The path walked by the Buddha's sons,
Because they thoroughly studied the expedient devices,
Was inconceivable.
Knowing that the multitudes delight in lesser Dharmas,*

*And also that they fear great wisdom,
Therefore the Bodhisattvas
Become Sound Hearers and Conditioned Enlightened Ones.
Employing countless expedient devices,
They transform all the varieties of living beings.
They speak of themselves as being Sound Hearers,
Very far from the Path of the Buddha.
They cross over limitless multitudes,
Bringing them all to accomplishment.
Even those of little zeal and who are remiss
Are gradually caused to become Buddhas.
Inwardly they practice as Bodhisattvas,
While outwardly they manifest as Sound Hearers
Of few desires, who despise birth and death,
While in reality they are purifying their Buddhahands.
Displaying to the multitudes the Three Poisons,
Appearing to have deviant views
In this way my disciples,
Expediently save living beings.
Were I to speak fully,
Of their various deeds of transformation
Living beings, hearing it,
Would harbor doubts within their minds.*

*Now, this Purnamaitreyaniputra,
In the past under thousands of millions of Buddhas,
Has cultivated diligently his practice of the Path
Proclaiming and protecting the Dharma of all the Buddhas.
Seeking supreme wisdom,
In the presence of the Buddhas,
He appeared as the head of the disciples.
With much learning and with wisdom
He spoke without fear,
Leading the assembly to rejoice,
And never did he grow weary,
Participating in the Buddhas' work.
Having already crossed over into great spiritual penetrations,
And having perfected the Four Unobstructed Wisdoms,
He knew the faculties of beings, sharp or dull,
And always spoke pure Dharma.
Proclaiming principles such as this,
He taught thousands of millions of multitudes,
To dwell in the Dharma of the Great Vehicle,
While he purified his own Buddhahand.
In the future, too, he will make offerings,
To limitless, countless Buddhas,*

*Helping to proclaim the Proper Dharma,
And also purifying his own Buddhaland
Always using expedient devices,
he will speak the Dharma without fear,
Saying incalculable multitudes,
So that they accomplish All-Wisdom.*

*Having made offerings to Thus Come Ones
And protected and upheld the precious storehouse of Dharma,
He will then become a Buddha
By the name Dharma Brightness.*

*His country will be named "Well-Purified", made of the seven jewels.
The aeon will be named "Jeweled Brightness."*

*The host of Bodhisattvas, very great,
Will entirely fill that land,
Numbering in the limitless millions,
All with great spiritual penetrations,
And the perfect power of awesome virtue;
The Sound Hearers also will be countless.
Having the Three Clarities and the Eight Liberations
And the Four Unobstructed Wisdoms,
They will constitute the Sangha there.
The living beings in that land,
Will have all severed sexual desire,
Born purely from transformation,
Their bodies adorned with perfect marks.
Taking Dharma-joy and Dharma-happiness as food,
They will have no thoughts of other kinds of food.
There will be no women there,
Nor any of the evil paths.*

*The Bhikshu Purna
Having perfected his virtue
Will gain such a pure land,
With a host of very many worthy sages.
Such are the limitless things of which
I have now but spoken in a general way.*

At that time, the twelve hundred Arhats whose minds had attained self-control had this thought, "We all rejoice, having attained what we never had before. If the World Honored One would see to conferring upon us a prediction as he has the other great disciples, would this not be a cause for rejoicing?"

The Buddha, knowing the thoughts in their minds, told Mahakashyapa: "I now confer upon these twelve hundred Arhats in succession a prediction of Anuttarasamyaksambodhi."

In this assembly, my great disciple, the Bhikshu, Kaundinya, will make offerings to sixty-two thousands of millions of Buddhas. Having done so, he will then become a Buddha by the name of Universal-Light Thus Come One, one Worthy of Offerings, one of Proper and Universal Knowledge, one of Perfect Clarity and Conduct, Well-Gone One who Understands the World, Unsurpassed Lord, A Taming and Regulating Hero, Teaching of People and Gods, A Buddha, The World Honored One.

"The five hundred Arhats, Uruvilvakashyapa, Gayakashyapa, Nadikashyapa, Kalodayin, Udayin, Aniruddha, Revata, Kapphina, Vakula, Cunda, Svagata, and others all will attain Anuttarasamyaksambodhi, all of them with the same name Universal-Brightness."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate his meaning, spoke verses, saying:

*The Bhikshu Kaundinya,
Will see limitless Buddhas,
And after Asankhyeya aeons,
Will realize Equal Proper Enlightenment.
Ever putting forth great light,
Perfecting all spiritual powers,
His name will be heard in the ten directions,
And he shall be revered by all.
He will always speak the Unsurpassed Path,
And will therefore be called Universal-Brightness.
His land will be pure,
With courageous and heroic Bodhisattvas.
All will mount wonderful towers,
And roam through the ten direction lands,
And supreme offerings
They will present to all the Buddhas.
Having made these offerings,
With minds full of rejoicing,
They will instantly return to their own lands,
Such are the spiritual powers they will have.
The lifespan of that Buddha will be sixty-thousand aeons,
His Proper Dharma will dwell twice that long.
The Dharma Image Age will be twice the length of that.
When the Dharma is extinguished, the gods and people will mourn.
These five hundred Bhikshus
Shall in turn become Buddhas
All by the name of Universal-Brightness.
Each shall bestow predictions on his successors*

*Saying, "After my extinction
Such and such shall become a Buddha.
The World in which he will teach
Will be like mine today.
The adornments of his land
And his spiritual powers,
The host of Bodhisattvas and Sound Hearers,
The Proper and Dharma Images Ages,
The number of aeons in his lifespan,
Will be as just stated.*

*Kashyapa, you should know
About these five hundred who have attained self-control.
As for the remaining Sound Hearers,
They shall be likewise.
To those not present in this assembly,
You should expound these matters.*

At that time, the five hundred Arhats, having received predictions from the Buddha, jumped for joy.

They rose from their seats and went before the Buddha, bowing with their heads at his feet. Repenting of their errors, they reproached themselves, saying, "World Honored One, we had always thought that we had already gained ultimate extinction. Now we know that we were like unknowing ones. Why is this? We should have obtained the Thus Come one's wisdom, but were content instead with lesser knowledge.

"World Honored One, it is like a person who goes to a close friend's house, gets drunk on wine, and lies down. His friend who is about to go away on official business, sews a priceless pearl inside his clothing as a gift, and then leaves.

"That person, in a drunken stupor, is not aware of anything. On arising, he sets out on his travels and reaches another country, where, for the sake of clothing and food, he expends much effort, endures great hardships, and is content with whatever little he may get.

"Later, his close friend happens to meet him again and says, 'Hey man! How can you, for the sake of food and clothing, have come to this?'

'Long ago, wishing you to gain peace, happiness, and enjoyment of the Five Desires, on such and such a day, month, and year I sewed a priceless pearl into your clothing. From of old until now, it has been present, but you did not know of it. Thus you have toiled and suffered to gain your livelihood. How stupid of you.

'You may now take this jewel, exchange it for what you need, and you will always have whatever you wish and be free from want.'

"The Buddha is also like this. When he was a Bodhisattva, he taught and transformed us, causing us to bring forth the thought of All-Wisdom.

"But, we later completely forgot, and were unknowing and unaware.

"Having attained the way of Arhatship, we said of ourselves that we had gained extinction. In the difficulty of maintaining our livelihood, we were content with what little we had gained."

"Still, our vows for All Wisdom remain; they have not been lost. Now, the World Honored One has caused us to wake up, saying, 'Bhikshus! What you have obtained is not ultimate extinction!

'For a long time, I have been leading you to plant good roots with the Buddha. As an expedient device, I manifested the marks of Nirvana. You said of yourself however, that you had actually attained extinction.'

"World Honored One, now at last we know that we are actually Bodhisattvas, having obtained a prediction for Annuttarasamyaksambodhi. For this reason we rejoice greatly, having gained what we never had before."

At that time, Ajnatakaundinya and the others, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses saying,

*"Hearing the supreme sound
Of the prediction of peace and tranquility,
We rejoice, gaining what we never had,
And bow before the Buddha of limitless wisdom.
Now, in the presence of the World Honored One,
We repent of our faults and mistakes.*

*Of the limitless jewels of the Buddha,
We'd gained but a small portion of Nirvana,
And, like unknowing, senseless people,
Contented ourselves with that.*

*It's like a poor person,
Who goes to a close friend's home,
A very wealthy household,
Stocked with delicacies.
Taking a priceless pearl
The friend sews it in the poor man's clothing
And silently departs,
While the poor man sleeps unaware.
When the man arises,
He travels to another land,*

*Where, seeking food and clothes to stay alive;
He suffers many difficulties, and
Satisfied with what little he may get,
Wishes for nothing better.
He's unaware that within his clothing
There is a priceless pearl.*

*The friend who gave him the pearl
Later sees the poor man again,
And having bitterly rebuked him,
Shows him the pearl he sewed in his clothing.
Seeing the pearl, the poor man's
Heart gave rise to great rejoicing.
Rich with much wealth
He enjoys the five desirable objects.*

*We, too, are like this
In the long night, the World Honored One
Has constantly pitied, seen, taught and transformed us.
Causing us to plant the supreme vows.
But, because we lacked wisdom
We were unaware and did not know,
And, gaining a small portion of Nirvana
We were satisfied and sought nothing more.*

*Now the Buddha has awakened us,
Saying this is not really extinction.
Gaining the Buddha's supreme wisdom,
That is true extinction.
Now, having heard from the Buddha
Of the matters of predictions and adornments,
And these predictions having been bestowed in succession,
We rejoice in body and in mind.*

CHAPTER 9

BESTOWING PREDICTIONS UPON THOSE STUDYING AND THOSE BEYOND STUDY

At that time Ananda and Rahula had this thought, "We have often thought how happy we would be if we received predictions!"

Then they went before the Buddha, bowed with their heads at his feet, and said, "World Honored One, we, too, should have a share in this, for it is only to the Thus Come One that we go for refuge."

"Further, we are seen, known and recognized by the gods, people and Asuras in all the worlds. Ananda is always your attendant, protecting and upholding the treasury of Dharma. Rahula is the Buddha's son. If the Buddha would see fit to bestow upon us a prediction for Annuttarasamyaksambodhi, our wishes would be fulfilled and the hopes of the assembly would be satisfied."

Then, the two thousand Sound Hearer disciples, those who were studying and those beyond study, all rose from their seats, bared their right shoulders, and went before the Buddha. Singlemindedly they put their palms together and gazed at the World Honored One expressing the same wish as Ananda and Rahula. Then they withdrew to one side.

At that time the Buddha told Ananda, "You in a future age shall become a Buddha by the name of King of Self-control and Penetrations with Wisdom like the Mountains and Seas Thus Come One, One Worthy of Offerings, One of Right and Universal Knowledge, One Whose Clarity and Conduct are Complete, Well-Gone One who Understands the World, Unsurpassed Lord, A Subduing and Taming Hero, Teaching of Gods and People, Buddha, The World Honored One. You shall make offerings to sixty-two million Buddhas, protecting and upholding their storehouses of Dharma. After that, you shall obtain Annuttarasamyaksambodhi. You shall teach and transform twenty-thousand myriads of millions of Gange's sands of Bodhisattvas, causing them to accomplish Annuttarasamyaksambodhi. Your country shall be called 'Banner of Victory Always Raised'. This land will be pure, with lapis lazuli for soil. The Kalpa shall be called 'All-pervasive Wonderful Sound'. This Buddha's lifespan shall be limitless thousands of myriads of millions of Asankhyeya aeons. Were someone to attempt to reckon it through thousands of myriads of millions of limitless Asankhyeya aeons, they could not do so. The Proper Dharma shall dwell in the world for twice that length of time. The Dharma Image Age shall dwell twice the length of the Proper Dharma.

"Ananda, the merit and virtue of the Buddha King of Self control and Penetrations with Wisdom like the Mountains and Seas shall be praised by all the Buddhas of the ten directions equal in number to the sands of limitless thousands of myriads of millions of Ganges rivers."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this principle, spoke verses saying:

*"Now in the midst of the Sangha, I say,
That Ananda, who upholds the Dharma,
Shall make offerings to all the Buddhas
And afterwards realize Right Enlightenment
His name will be The Buddha, King of Self-control and Penetrations,
With Wisdom like the Mountains and Seas.
His country shall be pure;
Called "Banner of Victory Always Raised".
He shall teach and transform the Bodhisattvas,
Uncountable in number.*

*This Buddha shall have great awesome virtue,
And his name shall be known throughout the ten directions.
His lifespan shall be limitless in length,
Because of his pity for living beings.
The Proper Dharma shall dwell twice as long as his lifespan,
And the Dharma Image Age will last twice that again.
Countless living beings,
Their number like the Ganges' sands,
Shall plant the causal condition of the Buddha Path,
Within this Buddha's Dharma.*

At that time, the eight thousand newly resolved Bodhisattvas within the Assembly all had this thought: "We have never heard even great Bodhisattvas receive predictions such as this. For what reason have the Sound Hearers received such directions?"

Then the World Honored One, knowing the thoughts in the minds of the Bodhisattvas, spoke to them, saying, "Good sons, Ananda and I, in the presence of the Buddha Emptiness King, simultaneously brought forth the thought of Anuttarasamyaksambodhi. Ananda always took delight in learning, while I was always diligent and vigorous. Therefore, I have already realized Anuttarasamyaksambodhi, and Ananda protects and upholds my Dharma. He will also protect the Dharma storehouses of all the Buddhas of the future, teaching, transforming and bringing to accomplishment the multitudes of Bodhisattvas. Since his past vow was such as this, he has therefore obtained this prediction.

When, Ananda, facing the Buddha, heard this prediction and heard of the adornments of his Buddhaland, his wishes were fulfilled, and his heart was filled with joy, for he had obtained what he never had before. He immediately recollected the Dharma storehouse of limitless thousands of myriads of millions of past Buddhas, penetrating them without obstruction, as if he had just heard them now. He also recalled his past vow.

At that time, Ananda spoke these verses:

*The World Honored One is extremely rare,
Having caused me to remember,
Limitless Buddhadharmas of the past,
As if I had but heard them today.
I now have no further doubts,
But dwell securely in the Buddha Path,
Acting expediently as his attendant,
Protecting and upholding the Buddhas' Dharmas.*

The Buddha then addressed Rahula saying, "You in a future age shall become a Buddha by the name of 'One Who Steps Upon Flowers of the Seven Jewels'. Thus Come One, One Worthy of Offerings, One of Proper and Universal Knowledge, One Whose Clarity and Conduct are Complete, Well Gone One Who Understands the World, Supreme Lord,

A Subduing and Taming Hero, Teaching of Gods and People, A Buddha, The World Honored One. You shall make offerings to Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, in number as the dust motes in ten world systems, always acting as the eldest son of those Buddhas, just as you are now. "The Buddha Who Steps Upon Flowers of the Seven Jewels" shall have an adorned land, and the number of aeons of his lifespan, the number of disciples he shall teach, the length of the Proper Dharma, and the Dharma Image Age shall be the same as those of the Thus Come One King of Self control and Penetrations with Wisdom like Mountains and Seas. He shall also be the eldest son of this Buddha and thereafter obtain Anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

Then, the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke these verses:

*"When I was a crown prince,
Rahula was my eldest son.
Now I have realized the Buddha Path,
He has received the Dharma and is my Dharma-son.
In a future age,
He shall see limitless millions of Buddhas,
And be the eldest son of each of them,
Singlemindedly seeking the Buddha Path.
Rahula's secret practices,
Only I can know.
He manifests as my eldest son
So manifesting himself to living beings.
His limitless thousand of myriads of millions
Of merits cannot be counted.
He abides securely in the Buddhadharma,
And thereby seeks the Supreme Path.*

At that time the World Honored One saw that those who study and those beyond study, two thousand in all, were pliant in mind, quiet and pure, singlemindedly contemplating the Buddha. The Buddha spoke to Ananda, saying, "Do you see these two thousand who study and are beyond study?"

"Yes, I have seen them."

"Ananda, they shall all make offerings to as many Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, as there are motes of dust in fifty worlds, revering and honoring them, protecting and upholding their storehouses of Dharma. Then simultaneously, in the lands of the ten directions, they shall each realize Buddhahood. They shall all have the same name, "Jewelled Appearance-Thus Come One," One Worthy of Offerings, One of Proper and Universal Knowledge, One Whose Clarity and Conduct are Complete, Well Gone One who Understands the World, Unsurpassed Lord, a Subduing and Taming Hero, Teacher of Gods and People, Buddha, World Honored One. Their lifespans shall be one aeon, the adornments of their lands, the number of Sound Hearers and Bodhisattvas, as well as the length of the Proper Dharma and Dharma Images Ages shall all be the same.

At that time, the Buddha, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying:

*Upon these two thousand Sound Hearers,
Now standing before me,
I bestow a prediction,
Of their future realization of Buddhahood.
The Buddhas to whom they shall make offerings
Shall be in number as stated above.
Protecting and upholding their Dharma storehouses,
They shall afterwards realize Proper Enlightenment.
Each one, throughout the ten directions,
Shall have the same name,
And at the same time sit upon their Bodhimandas.
Because they shall have certified to Supreme Wisdom,
They shall all be called "Jeweled Appearance"
Their lands and their disciples,
And the length of the Proper Dharma and Dharma Image Ages,
Shall be identical with no difference.
They shall all use spiritual powers,
To save living beings in the ten directions.
Their renown shall be all pervasive,
As they gradually enter into Nirvana.*

At that time, the two thousand people, both those who study and those beyond study, hearing the Buddha bestow these predictions, jumped for joy and spoke verses, saying:

*O World Honored One, Bright-Lamp-of-Wisdom,
Hearing the sound of these predictions,
Our hearts are filled with joy,
As if sprinkled with sweet dew.*

CHAPTER TEN

MASTERS OF THE DHARMA

At that time the World Honored One, through Medicine King Bodhisattva, spoke to the eighty thousand great lords saying, "Medicine King, do you see within this great assembly the limitless gods, Dragon Kings, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Asuras, Garudas, Kinnaras, Mahoragas. and beings both human and non human, as well as the Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, Upasikas, those seeking to be Sound Hearers, those seeking to be Pratyekabuddhas, and those seeking the Buddha Path? Upon such ones as these, all in the presence of the Buddha, who hear but one verse or one sentence of the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra, or who have even one thought of rejoicing in it, I bestow predictions of their future attainment of Annuttarasamyaksambodhi."

The Buddha told Medicine King: "Furthermore, after the extinction of the Thus Come One, should there be one who hears but a single verse or a single sentence of The

Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra or who has even one thought of rejoicing in it, I bestow upon him as well a prediction of Annuttarasamyaksambodhi.

"Further, should there be one who receives and upholds, reads and recites, explains and teaches, or copies out The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra, be it even a single verse, looking upon the sutra text with reverence as he would the Buddha himself, making various kinds of offerings of flowers, incense, beads, powdered incense, paste incense, burning incense, silk canopies, banners, clothing and music, or who even join his palms in reverence, O Medicine King, you should know that such a person has in the past already made offerings to tens of myriads of millions of Buddhas, in the presence of those Buddhas, accomplishing great vows. It is out of pity for living beings that he is born among human beings.

"O Medicine King, if someone should ask you what type of living beings shall in the future become Buddhas, you should point out to him that these very people in the future certainly shall become Buddhas. Why is this? If a good man or good woman receives and upholds, reads, recites, explains and teaches, or writes out even a single sentence of the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra, or makes various offerings to the sutra text of flower, incense, beads, powdered incense, paste incense, burning incense, silk canopies, banners, clothing, music, or reverently joined palms, that person should be looked up to in reverence by those in all worlds and should receive offerings befitting the Thus Come One. You should know that this person is a great Bodhisattva, one who has accomplished Annuttarasamyaksambodhi. Out of pity for living beings, he has vowed to be born here and to expound upon The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra broadly and in detail.

"How much the more does this apply to one who can receive and uphold it in its entirety and make various kinds of offerings to it.

"Medicine King, you should know that this person has renounced his own pure Karmic reward and, after my extinction, out of pity for living beings, has been born in the evil world to vastly proclaim this Sutra.

"If this good man or good woman after my extinction can secretly explain even so much as a single sentence of The Dharma Flower Sutra for a single person, you should know that this person is a messenger of the Thus Come One, sent by the Thus Come One to do the Thus Come One's work.

"How much the more so is this the case for one who can in the midst of a great assembly extensively explain it to people.

"O Medicine King, should an evil person with unwholesome mind appear before the Buddha, slandering and scolding him constantly for the length of an aeon, his offenses would be relatively light compared to the offenses of a person who speaks even a single evil word reviling one who reads or recites The Dharma Flower Sutra. That person's offense would be very grave.

"O Medicine King, you should know that one who reads and recites The Dharma Flower Sutra takes the Buddha's adornments as his own adornments. He shall carry the Thus Come One on his shoulders. Wherever he goes, he should be welcomed with obeisance. Single mindedly, and with palms joined, one should pay reverence, make offerings, honor, and praise him. He should receive the finest offerings among people, offerings of flowers, incense, beads, powdered incense, paste incense, burning incense, silk canopies, banners, clothing, fine food, and music. Heavenly jewels should be scattered over him, and clusters of the finest heavenly jewels offered to him.

"What is the reason? When this person joyfully speaks the Dharma, those who hear it for but an instant shall directly achieve ultimate Annuttarasamyaksambodhi"

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate these principles, spoke verses, saying:

*One wishing to dwell in the Buddha Path
And to accomplish spontaneous wisdom
Should diligently make offerings
To those who receive and uphold The Dharma Flower.
One wishing quickly to gain
The wisdom of all modes
Should receive and uphold this Sutra
And make offerings to those who uphold it.*

*One who can receive and uphold
The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra
You should know the Buddha sent him,
Out of pity for living beings.
Those who can receive and hold
The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra,
Have renounced their pure lands,
And, pitying beings, have been reborn here.
You should know that such people,
Are free to be born wherever they wish,
And can, in this evil world
Vastly teach the supreme Dharma.
One should make offerings of heavenly flowers
Incense and heavenly jeweled garments,
And heaven's finest, most marvelous gems,
To the teachers of this Dharma.*

*One who can uphold this Sutra
After my extinction, in the evil age,
Should be worshipped with palms joined
As if making offerings to the World Honored One
Fine food and many sweet delicacies*

*And various kinds of clothing,
Should be offered to this disciple of the Buddha,
Hoping to hear him speak even for a moment.
One who can, in the latter age.
Receive and uphold this Sutra,
Has been sent by me into the human realm,
To carry out the Thus Come One's work.*

*If for the space of an aeon,
One were to harbor an unwholesome mind
And scowling, scold the Buddha,
he would incur measureless offenses.
But if one were, but for a moment, to speak ill
Of one who reads, recites, or upholds The Dharma Flower Sutra,
His offenses would exceed the former's
If one who seeks the Buddha Path
Were for the length of an aeon
To stand before me with palms joined,
Praising me with countless verses,
Because of his praise of the Buddha,
He would gain limitless merit and virtue.
But one who praises the keeper of this Sutra
Would gain blessings exceeding that.
One who, throughout eighty million aeons
Made offerings to the keeper of this Sutra
Of the finest forms, sounds,
Fragrances, tastes, and tangible objects,
And having made such offerings,
Gets to hear it for but an instant,
He should be filled with rejoicing
Thinking, "I have gained great benefit!"*

*Medicine King, I tell you now,
Of all the Sutras I have spoken,
The Dharma Flower is foremost.*

At that time, the Buddha further told the Bodhisattva, Mahasattva Medicine King, "Of all the limitless thousands of myriads of millions of Sutras I have spoken, am speaking, or will speak, The Dharma Flower is the hardest to believe and the hardest to understand.

"Medicine King, this Sutra is the treasury of the Buddhas' secrets and essentials. It must not be distributed or falsely presented to people. That which the Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, have guarded from the distant past until now, has never been explicitly taught. This Sutra incurs much hatred and jealousy even now, when the Thus Come One is present. How much the more so will this be the case after his extinction!"

"Medicine King, you should know that after my extinction, those who can write out, uphold, read, recite, make offerings to and explain it for others, shall be covered with the Thus Come One's robes and shall also be protected and held in mind by the Buddhas present in other directions. These people have great powers of faith, powers of resolution and vows and the power of good roots. Know that these people shall dwell together with the Thus Come One and shall have their heads rubbed by the hand of the Thus Come One."

"Medicine King, in any place where this Sutra is spoken, read, recited, written out, or stored, one should build a Stupa of the seven jewels, making it high, broad, and adorned. It is not necessary to place Sharira in it. Why is this? Within it already is the complete body of the Thus Come One. To this Stupa one should make offerings of all kinds of flowers, incense, beads, silk canopies, banners, vocal and instrumental music, honoring and praising it. If people should see this Stupa, bow before it, and make offerings to it, you should know that they are close to Anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

"Medicine King, many people, both at home and left home, practice the Bodhisattva Path. If they are unable to see, hear, recite, write out, uphold, or make offerings to The Dharma Flower Sutra, know that these people have not yet skillfully practiced the Bodhisattva Path. If they are able to hear this Sutra, then they will be able to skillfully practice the Bodhisattva Path.

"If living beings who seek the Buddha Path get to see or hear The Dharma Flower Sutra and, having done so, receive and uphold it with faith and understanding, know that these people have drawn near to Anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

"Medicine King, it is like a person who is thirsty and in need of water. Although he digs for it on a high plain, all he sees in dry earth, and he knows the water is still far off. He continues efforts without cease and eventually sees moist earth and then mud. He is then certain that water must be close at hand.

"The Bodhisattvas are also like this. Know that those who have not yet heard, not yet understood, or not yet put into practice The Dharma Flower Sutra, are still far from Anuttarasamyaksambodhi. Those who have heard and understood, thought upon, and put it into practice certainly should be known as coming near to Anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

"What is the reason? The Anuttarasamyaksambodhi of all the Bodhisattvas belongs to this Sutra. Thus Sutra opens the expedient Dharma doors. It demonstrates the true, real mark. The storehouse of The Dharma Flower Sutra is deep, solid, recondite, and far reaching. No one could reach it except that now, the Buddha, in teaching and transforming the Bodhisattvas and bringing them to accomplishment, demonstrates it for their sakes.

"Medicine King, if a Bodhisattva upon hearing The Dharma Flower Sutra is frightened or afraid, you should know that he is a Bodhisattva of newly resolved mind. If a Sound

Hearer, upon hearing this Sutra is frightened or afraid, you should know that he is one of overweening arrogance.

Medicine King, if there is a good man or a good woman, after the extinction of the Thus Come One, who wishes to speak The Dharma Flower Sutra for the sake of the Four Assemblies, how should they speak it? This good man or good woman should enter the Thus Come One's room, put on the Thus Come One's robe, sit on the Thus Come One's throne, and only then expound upon this Sutra for the sake of the Four Assemblies.

"The Thus Come One's room is the mind of great compassion towards all living beings. The Thus Come One's robes are the mind of gentleness and patience. The Thus Come One's throne is the emptiness of all Dharmas.

"Established security in these one may then, with an unflagging mind expound upon The Dharma Flower Sutra for the sake of the Bodhisattvas and the Four Assemblies.

"Medicine King, from another country, I will send transformed people to gather an assembly of Dharma listeners. I will also send transformed Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas to listen to the Dharma being spoken. All these transformed people, hearing the Dharma, will believe it and accept it, and comply with it without objection. If one speaks the Dharma in an uninhabited place, I will send gods, ghosts, spirits, Gandharvas, Asuras, and so forth, to listen to him speak the Dharma. Although I am in another country, I will at all times cause the speaker of Dharma to be able to see me. Should he forget a single punctuation mark of the Sutra, I will remind him of it, causing his knowledge to be perfected."

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses saying,

*One who wishes to get rid of laxness,
Should listen to this Sutra.
This Sutra is hard to hear,
And those who believe it and accept it are also rare.*

*It is like a person thirsty and in need of water
Who digs for it on a high plain,
And sees only dry, parched earth,
And knows that water is still far off.
Gradually he sees moist earth and then mud.
And knows for sure that water is near.*

*Medicine King, you should know
In this way, those people
Who do not hear The Dharma Flower Sutra
Are very far from the Buddha's wisdom.
Those who hear this profound Sutra,*

*Will thoroughly understand the Sound Hearer Dharmas.
This is the king of Sutras
And as to those who hear it and ponder upon it,
You should know that such people,
Have drawn close to the Buddha's wisdom.*

*One who speaks this Sutra
Should enter the Thus Come One's room
Put on the Thus Come One's robes,
And sit on the Thus Come One's throne,
And fearlessly, in the assembly,
Expound it to them in detail.
Great compassion is the Thus Come One's room,
Gentleness and patience are the Thus Come One's robes,
The emptiness of all Dharmas is the Thus Come One's throne.
Dwelling in this, one should speak the Dharma.
If, when one speaks this Sutra
Someone should slander him with evil mouth,
Or hit him with knives, sticks, tiles or stones
Recollecting the Buddha, he should endure this.*

*In a thousand myriads of millions of lands
I manifest a pure, solid body,
Throughout limitless millions of aeons,
Speaking Dharma for the sake of living beings.
If after my extinction,
There is one who can speak this Sutra,
I will send by transformation the Four Assemblies,
Bhikshus and Bhikshunis,
As well as men and women of purity,
To make offerings to that Dharma Master.
I will gather living beings there
To listen to the Dharma.
Should someone wish to harm him,
With knives, sticks, tiles, or stones,
I will send transformed people,
To surround and protect him.
Should the speaker of Dharma
Be alone in an uninhabited place
Where it is lonely without a human sound,
And there be reading and reciting this Sutra,
I will then manifest
A pure and radiant body.
Should he forget a single passage or sentence,
I will remind him so he recites it smoothly.
Should persons of such virtue*

*Preach for the Four Assemblies,
Or recite the Sutra in a deserted place,
They shall all see me.
Should one be dwelling in an empty place
I will send gods and dragon kings,
Yakshas, ghosts, spirits, and so forth
To be listeners in the Dharma assembly.
This person will delight in speaking the Dharma,
And explain it in detail without obstruction.
Because the Buddhas are protective and mindful of him,
He can cause the assembly to rejoice greatly.*

*One who draws near this Dharma Master
Will quickly gain the Bodhisattva Path.
One who follows this master in study
Will see Buddhas as countless as the Ganges' sands.*

CHAPTER ELEVEN

VISION OF THE JEWELLED STUPA

At that time, there manifested before the Buddha a Stupa made of the seven jewels. It was five hundred Yojanas in height and two hundred and fifty Yojanas in breadth. It welled up out of the earth and stood in empty space, adorned with all kinds of jeweled objects. It had five thousand railings and thousands of myriads of alcoves. Countless banners and pennants adorned it as well. Jeweled beads were hung from it and myriads of millions of jeweled bells were suspended from its top. The scent of Tamalapatracandana issued from all four sides and filled the entire world. All its banners and canopies were made of the seven jewels: gold, silver, lapis lazuli, mother of pearl, carnelian, real pearls and agate reaching up to the palace of the four heavenly kings.

From the Heaven of the Thirty-Three there rained heavenly Mandarva flowers as an offering to the jeweled Stupa. All the gods, dragons, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Ashuras, Garudas, Kinnaras, Mahoragas, humans, non-humans and so forth, thousands of myriads of millions of them, made offerings to the jeweled Stupa of all kinds of flowers, incense, beads, banners, canopies and instrumental music, reverently honoring it and praising it.

At that time, a loud voice issued from the Stupa speaking in praise, saying, "Good indeed, good indeed, Shakyamuni, World Honored One that you are able, by means of your undifferentiating great wisdom, to speak for the great assembly, The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra, a Dharma for teaching Bodhisattvas of whom the Buddhas are protective and mindful. So it is, so it is, Shakyamuni, World Honored One, that all you say is true and real."

Just then the Four Assemblies, seeing the great jeweled Stupa standing in mid-air and hearing the voice from within it, all gained Dharma joy and marveled at this

unprecedented occurrence. They rose from their seats, reverently placed their palms together and withdrew to one side.

Just then a Bodhisattva Mahasattva by the name of Great Delight in speaking, knowing the doubts in the minds of all the gods, humans, and Asuras and others from all the worlds, spoke to the Buddha saying, "World Honored One, by means of what causes and conditions has this jeweled Stupa welled up out of the earth and produced this loud sound?"

Then the Buddha told the Bodhisattva Great Delight in speaking, "Within this jeweled Stupa is the complete body of the Thus Come One. Long ago, limitless thousands of myriads of millions of Asankheya worlds to the east, in a land called Jeweled Purity, there was a Buddha by the name of Many Jewels. When this Buddha was practicing the Bodhisattva path, he made a great vow saying, 'After I have become a Buddha and passed into extinction, in any of the ten direction lands where the Dharma Flower Sutra is being spoken, my Stupa shall appear there, that I may hear the Sutra and certify it, praising it, saying, 'Good indeed! good indeed!'

"After that Buddha had realized the Way, when he was about to enter into extinction, in the great assembly of gods and humans he spoke to the Bhikshus saying, 'After my extinction, those who wish to make offerings to my complete body should build a large Stupa.'

"By the power of his spiritual penetrations and his vow, throughout the ten direction worlds wherever anyone speaks The Dharma Flower Sutra that Buddha's jeweled Stupa containing his complete body wells up from the earth before the one speaking and expresses praise by saying, 'Good indeed! Good indeed!'

"Great Delight in speaking! Because he has heard The Dharma Flower Sutra being spoken, the Stupa of the Thus Come One Many Jewels has now welled up out of the earth with these words of praise, "Good indeed! Good indeed!"

Just then, the Bodhisattva Great Delight in speaking, by means of the spiritual power of The Thus Come One, spoke to the Buddha saying, "World Honored One, we all wish to see this Buddha's body."

The Buddha told the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Great Delight in speaking, "The Buddha Many Jewels has made a profound and solemn vow: When my jeweled Stupa manifests in the presence of the Buddhas because The Dharma Flower Sutra is heard, if there is anyone who wishes me to show my body to the Four Assemblies, then the division body Buddhas of that Buddha who is speaking Dharma in the worlds of the ten directions, must all return and gather together in one place. Afterward, my body will appear.

"Great Delight in Speaking, my division body Buddhas present in the ten direction worlds speaking Dharma should now gather together."

Great Delight in Speaking said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we also wish to see the division bodies of the World Honored One so that we may bow to them and make offerings."

At that time the Buddha emitted a white-hair mark light in which were seen the Buddhas of the lands in the eastern direction equal in number to the grains of sand in five hundred myriads of millions of Nayutas of Ganges rivers. All the Buddhalands had crystal for soil, and were adorned with jeweled trees and jeweled clothing. Countless thousands of myriads of millions of Bodhisattvas filled them. They were covered with jeweled canopies and jeweled nets. The Buddhas in those lands with a great and wonderful sound, were speaking the Dharma. Also seen were limitless thousands of myriads of millions of Bodhisattvas filling those lands speaking the Dharma for the multitudes. Thus it was also in the south, west, north, the four intermediate directions, as well as up and downward wherever the white hair-mark light shone.

At that time all the Buddhas of the ten directions addressed the host of Bodhisattvas saying, "Good men! We should now go to the Saha world, to the place of Shakyamuni Buddha and make offerings to the Stupa of the Thus Come One Many Jewels."

Just then the Saha world was transformed into one of purity, with lapis lazuli for soil and adorned with jeweled trees. Its eight roads were bordered with golden cards. In it there were no towns, villages, cities, oceans, rivers, streams, mountains, brooks, forests or thickets. Precious incense was burned and Mandarava flowers completely covered the ground. Above it were spread jeweled nets and banners hung with jeweled bells. Only those in the assembly remained, as the gods and humans had been moved to another land.

Then all the Buddhas, each bringing with him one great Bodhisattva as an attendant, reached the Saha world and went to the foot of a jeweled tree. Each jeweled tree was five hundred Yojanas in height and adorned with branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. Beneath each jeweled tree was a lion throne five hundred Yojanas in height adorned with great jewels. Then each of the Buddhas sat in the lotus posture on his own throne.

In this way, by turns, the lands of the three thousand great thousand world were filled, and still there was no end to the division bodies of Shakyamuni Buddha from even one direction.

Then Shakyamuni Buddha, wishing to accommodate his division body Buddhas, transformed in each of the eight directions, two hundred myriads of millions of Nayutas of lands, purifying them all. They were without hells, hungry ghosts, animals or Asuras. The gods and humans were all moved to other lands. The lands he transformed all had lapis lazuli for soil and were adorned with jeweled trees five hundred Yojanas tall, decorated with branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. Beneath each tree was a jeweled lion throne, five Yojanas tall decorated with various gems. There were no oceans, rivers or streams and no Mucilinda or Mahamucilinda mountains, no iron ring or great iron ring mountains, and no Mount Sumerus or other kings of mountains. All became one Buddha land. The jeweled earth was level and flat, covered entirely with gem-studded canopies

and hung with banners. Precious incense was burned and heavenly, precious flowers covered the ground.

Shakyamuni Buddha, in order that the Buddhas who were coming might have a place to sit, then further transformed in each of the eight directions, two hundred myriads of Nayutas of lands, purifying them all. They were without hells, hungry ghosts, animals or Asuras. The gods and humans were all moved to other lands. The lands he transformed all had lapis lazuli for soil and were adorned with jeweled trees five hundred Yojanas tall, decorated with branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits. Beneath each tree was a jeweled lion throne five Yojanas tall decorated with various gems. There were no oceans, rivers, or streams, and no Mucilinda or Mahamucilinda mountains, no iron ring or great iron ring mountains, and no Mount Sumerus or any other kings of mountains. All became one Buddha land. The jeweled earth was level and flat, covered entirely with gem-studded canopies, and hung with banners. Precious incense was burned and heavenly, precious flowers covered the ground.

Then, the division bodies of Shakyamuni Buddha from the eastern direction, Buddhas in number to the grains of sand in a hundred thousand myriads of millions of Nayutas of lands, each speaking the Dharma, assembled there. In like manner, in turn, the Buddhas from all the ten directions arrived and assembled there, taking their seats in the eight directions.

At that time, each direction was filled with Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, from the four hundred myriads of millions of nayutas of lands in each of the four directions.

At that time, all those Buddhas each seated on a lion throne beneath a jeweled tree, sent an attendant to inquire after Shakyamuni Buddha giving them each a sack full of flowers and saying to them, "Good men! Go to Mount Grdhrakuta, to the place of Shakyamuni Buddha and ask, in our name, 'Are you free from illness and distress? Are you strong and at ease? Are the hosts of Bodhisattvas and Sound Hearers at peace?' Then scatter these precious flowers before the Buddha as an offering saying, 'The Buddha so-and-so wishes that the jeweled Stupa be opened.'" All the Buddhas sent attendants in this manner.

Then, Shakyamuni Buddha, seeing that the division body Buddhas had all assembled there, each seated on a lion throne, and hearing that all the Buddhas together wished that the jeweled Stupa be opened, immediately arose from his seat into empty space. All those of the Four Assemblies rose, placed their palms together, and singlemindedly beheld the Buddha.

Then, Shakyamuni Buddha, using his right-forefinger, opened the door of the Stupa of seven jewels, which made a great sound like that of a bolt being removed from a large city gate.

Thereupon, the entire assembly perceived the Thus Come One Many Jewels seated upon the lion throne inside the jeweled Stupa, his body whole and undecayed as if he were in

Dhyana Samadhi. They also heard him say, "Good indeed! Good indeed! Shakyamuni Buddha! Quickly speak The Dharma Flower Sutra! I came here to hear this Sutra!"

The Four Assemblies, upon seeing a Buddha who had crossed over into extinction limitless thousands of myriads of millions of aeons ago, speak in this way, praised it as something unprecedented, they scattered heaps of precious heavenly flowers upon the Buddha Many Jewels and Shakyamuni Buddha.

The Buddha Many Jewels, in the jeweled Stupa, offered half of his seat to Shakyamuni Buddha, saying, "Shakyamuni Buddha, would you take this seat?" Shakyamuni Buddha then entered the Stupa and sat down in full lotus on half of that seat.

The great assembly, seeing the two Thus Come Ones seated in the jeweled Stupa in full lotus on the lion throne, all had this thought, "The Buddhas are sitting up so high and far off. We only wish that the Thus Come One would use the power of his spiritual penetrations and enable us all to dwell in empty space."

Shakyamuni Buddha then used his spiritual powers and took the entire assembly up into empty space.

With a great voice he addressed the Four Assemblies, saying; "Who, in this Saha land, can broadly speak this Sutra of the Dharma Flower? Now is the proper time, for the Thus Come One will shortly enter Nirvana. The Buddha wishes to bequeath The Dharma Flower Sutra."

The World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses saying:

*The sagely lord, World Honored One,
Although long extinct
Within this jeweled Stupa
Has come here for the Dharma.
Who would not be diligent
For the sake of the Dharma?
This Buddha became extinct
Countless aeons ago and yet,
In place after place, he listens to the Dharma,
Because it is difficult to encounter.
In the past this Buddha made a vow,
"After my extinction,
I will go everywhere
In order to hear the Dharma."*

*Also, my division bodies,
Limitless Buddhas,
Equal in number to the Ganges' sands
Have come, wishing to hear the Dharma*

*And to see the extinct
Thus Come One, Many Jewels.
Casting aside their wondrous lands
And assemblies of disciples
Gods, people, dragons and spirits,
And various offerings,
They have come here
To cause the Dharma long to abide.
In order to seat those Buddhas,
I have used my spiritual powers,
To move countless multitudes
And purify the lands.
Each one of the Buddhas
Takes his place beneath a jeweled tree
Like a lotus adoring
A clear, clean pond.
Beneath the jeweled trees,
There are lion thrones
Upon which the Buddhas sit,
Adorned with brilliant light,
Like great torches gleaming
In the darkness of the night.
Their bodies emit a delicate fragrance
Prevailing the ten direction lands
All beings perfumed by it
Are overwhelmed with joy.
Like a great wind
Blowing the small trees,
By means of this expedient device,
The Dharma is caused long to abide.*

*To the great assembly. I say:
"After my extinction
Who can protect and uphold,
Read, speak and recite this Sutra?
Now, in the presence of the Buddhas
He should make a vow.*

*The Buddha Many Jewels
Although long extinct
By means of his great vow
Utters the lion's roar.
The Thus Come One Many Jewels,
As well as myself,
And the transformation Buddhas here assembled
Will know of this resolution.*

*All you disciples of the Buddha,
Whoever can protect this Dharma,
Should make a great vow
To cause the Dharma long to abide.*

*Whoever can protect
The Dharma of this Sutra,
The Buddha Many Jewels
Has thereby made offerings
To me and Many Jewels.
Dwelling in the jeweled Stupa,
Always travels throughout the ten directions,
For the sake of this Sutra.
Moreover, they will have made offerings,
To the transformation Buddhas here,
Who adorn with splendor,
All the worlds.
If one speaks this Sutra,
They will then see me,
The Thus Come One Many Jewels,
And the transformation Buddhas.*

*All of you good men
Think it over carefully!
This is a difficult matter
Requiring a great vow.*

*Other Sutras number
Like the Ganges river's sands
But although one spoke them,
It would not be thought difficult.*

*If one took Mount Sumeru
And tossed it to another land
Across countless Buddhas lands,
That also would not be difficult.*

*Or if with a toe
One kicked the great thousand worlds*

*To another, far-off land,
That also would not be difficult.*

*Were one to stand on the peak of being
And for the multitudes proclaim,*

*Limitless other Sutras,
That, too, would not be difficult.*

*But if after the Buddha's extinction
Within the evil age,
One can speak this Sutra,
That is difficult.*

*If someone took
Empty space in his hand
And wandered around with it
That would not be difficult.*

*But if, after my extinction
One can write out and uphold it
And encourage others to write it out,
That is difficult.*

*If one were to take the earth
And place it on one's toenail,
And carry it up to the Brahma heavens,
That, too, would not be difficult.*

*After the Buddha's extinction,
In the evil age
To read this Sutra but for an instant,
That is difficult.*

*If, during the fire at the Kalpa's end
One carried a load of dry grass on one's back
And entering the fire was not burned
That would not be difficult.*

*But after my extinction
If one can uphold the Sutra
And speak it to a single person,
That is difficult.*

*If one upheld eighty four-thousand
Dharma treasures
And the Twelve Divisions of the canon
Expounding upon them to others
Causing all the listeners
To gain the Six Spiritual Penetrations,
Even if one could do this*

*It would not be difficult.
But if, after my extinction,
One can listen to and accept this Sutra
And inquire into its meaning
That is difficult.*

*If one were to speak the Dharma
And cause a thousand myriads of millions
Of limitless, countless
Beings, like the Ganges' sands,
To obtain Arhatship
And perfect the Six Spiritual Penetrations,
Although it would be beneficial,
It would not be difficult.*

*But after my extinction,
If one can reverently uphold
such a Sutra as this
That indeed is difficult!*

*I, for the sake of the Buddha Way,
Throughout limitless lands,
From the beginning until now,
Have broadly expounded all the Sutras
And among them all
This Sutra is foremost.
If one can uphold it
He then upholds the Buddha's body.*

*Good men,
After my extinction,
Who can receive and uphold,
Read, and recite this Sutra,
Now, in the presence of the Buddhas should make a vow.*

*This Sutra is hard to uphold,
If one upholds it for but an instant,
I will rejoice,
And so will all the Buddhas.*

*One such as this
Shall be praised by all the Buddhas:
"This is courage!
This is vigor,
This is called morality
And the practice of the Dhutas."*

*He will then quickly obtain
The supreme Buddha Way.
If, in the future, one
Can read and uphold this Sutra,
He is then a true disciple of the Buddha,
Dwelling in the pure, good stage.
And one who after the Buddha's extinction,
Can understand its meaning,
Will act as eyes
For all gods and humans in the world.
In the gate of terror,
One who can speak it for an instant,
Will be worthy of the offerings
Of all the gods and humans.*

CHAPTER TWELVE DEVADATTA

At that time, the Buddha told the Bodhisattvas, gods, humans, and the Four Assemblies, "In the past, throughout limitless aeons, I sought the *Dharma Flower Sutra* without laxness or weariness.

"For many aeons, I was a king and vowed to seek supreme Bodhi with an unretreating mind.

"Wishing to perfect the Six Paramitas, I diligently practiced giving, my mind not begrudging elephants, horses, the seven precious things, countries, cities, wives, children, slaves servants, even my head, eyes, marrow, brains, body, flesh, hands, and feet--not sparing even life itself.

"The people of that time had a limitless lifespan. For the sake of the Dharma, I renounced the royal position, leaving the government to the crown prince. I beat upon the Dharma drum, announcing my search for Dharma in the four directions, saying, 'Whoever can speak the Great Vehicle for me, for him I will act as a servant for the rest of my life!'

"At that time a seer came forth and spoke to the king, saying, 'I have a Great Vehicle scripture by the name of *The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra*. If you do not disobey me, I will expound it for you.'

"When I, the king, heard the seer's words, I jumped for joy. I then followed the seer, supplying all of his needs: picking fruit, drawing water, gathering firewood, and preparing food, even offering my own body as a couch for him, feeling no weariness in body or mind. I served him for a thousand years, for the sake of the Dharma, diligently waiting upon him so he lacked nothing."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying,

*I recall, in Kalpas past, when seeking Dharma,
Although I was a king at the time
I had no greed to enjoy the Five Desires.
Ringing the bell, I announced in the four directions:
"If whoever has the Great Dharma
Will explain it to me, I will be his servant."*

*"Then the seer Asita came and spoke to me,
The king, saying, 'I have the subtle, wonderful Dharma,
Rare in all the world. If you can cultivate it,
I will speak it for your sake.'*

*"Hearing what the seer said,
My heart was filled with great joy.
I then followed the seer,
Supplying him with all his needs,
Gather firewood, fruit, and melons,
Respectfully presenting them at the proper time.
Because I cherished the Wonderful Dharma,
I was neither lax nor tired in body or mind.
I diligently sought the Great Dharma
For the sake of all living beings.*

*And not for my own sake,
Or for the pleasure of the Five Desires.
Thus as King of a Great Realm,
I diligently sought to obtain this Dharma,
And accordingly achieved Buddhahood,
And now I speak it to you.*

The Buddha told the Bhikshus, "The king was I, myself, in a former life and the seer was the present Devadatta.

"It is because of my good and wise advisor, Devadatta, that I have perfected the Six Paramitas of kindness, compassion, joy, and giving, as well as the Thirty-two Marks and Eighty Fine Characteristics, coloring of burnished purple-gold, the Ten Powers, the Four Fearlessnesses, the Four Dharmas of Attraction, the Eighteen Unshared Dharmas, the power of the way of spiritual penetrations, the accomplishment of equal, proper enlightenment, and the vast rescue of living beings. All this came about because of my good and wise advisor, Devadatta.

"I announce to the Four Assemblies that, after limitless aeons have passed, Devadatta will become a Buddha by the name of King of Gods Thus Come One, One Worthy of

Offerings, One of Right and Universal Knowledge, One Whose Clarity and Conduct are Complete, Well-gone One Who Understands the World, Supreme Lord, Regulating Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, World Honored One. His world shall be called Pathway of the Gods.

"He shall dwell in the world for twenty middle-sized aeons, broadly speaking the wonderful Dharma for living beings. Living beings in number like the Ganges sands shall attain the fruit of Arhatship. Limitless living beings will bring forth the resolve to enlighten to conditions. Living beings in number like Ganges sands will bring forth the Supreme Mind of the Path, attain Patience with the Non-production of Dharmas, and arrive at irreversibility.

"After the Parinirvana of the Buddha King of Gods, the proper Dharma will dwell in the world for twenty middle-sized aeons. A stupa sixty Yojanas high and forty Yojanas wide, made of the seven jewels will be built to hold the Sharira of his complete body. All the gods and humans shall make offerings to and worship the wonderful stupa of seven jewels, using various flowers, powdered incense, burning incense, paste incense, clothing, beads, banners, jeweled canopies, instrumental and vocal music.

Limitless living beings shall attain the fruit of Arhatship. Limitless living beings will awaken to Pratyeka Buddhahood. An inconceivable number of living beings will bring forth the resolve for Bodhi and reach irreversibility."

The Buddha told the Bhikshus, in the future if a good man or good woman hears the Devadatta chapter of *The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra* and with a pure mind believes and reveres it, having no doubts, he will not fall into the hells, into the realm of hungry ghosts, or into the animal realm. He will be born in the presence of the Buddhas of the ten directions, always hearing this Sutra wherever he may be born. Should he be reborn among humans and gods, he will receive supreme and subtle bliss. If born in the presence of a Buddha, he will be born by transformation from a Lotus Flower."

At that time, a Bodhisattva-attendant of Many Jewel, World Honored One, from the lower regions by the name of Wisdom Accumulation, spoke to the Buddha Many Jewels, saying, "Let's return to our own land."

Shakyamuni Buddha told Wisdom Accumulation, "Good man, wait a moment longer. There is a Bodhisattva named Manjushri. You should meet him and discuss the Wonderful Dharma. Then you may return to your country."

Then Manjushri, sitting on a thousand petalled lotus as large as a carriage wheel, along with the Bodhisattvas who accompanied him, also sitting on jeweled lotuses, spontaneously rose up out of the Great Sea from the Sagara Dragon Palace. They rose high into the air and went to Magic Vulture Mountain. Descending from his lotus, he went before the Buddhas and bowed in worship at the feet of the two World Honored Ones. Having paid his respects, he went up to Wisdom-Accumulation and when they had inquired after each other's welfare, they moved to one side and sat down.

Wisdom Accumulation Bodhisattva asked Manjushri, "Humane one, how many living beings have you taught there in the Dragon Palace?"

Manjushri Bodhisattva, replied, "An unlimited, unreckonable number, one that cannot be expressed in words or fathomed by the mind. Wait just a moment and you will have proof for yourself."

Before he had finished speaking, countless Bodhisattvas sitting upon jeweled lotuses rose up out of the sea, went to Magic Vulture Mountain and hovered there in space. These Bodhisattvas had been taught and crossed over by Manjushri Bodhisattva. All of them had perfected the Bodhisattva practices and were discussing among themselves the Six Paramitas. Those who had been Sound Hearers were in empty space expounding upon the practices of Sound Hearers. All of them were now cultivating the principle of emptiness of the Great Vehicle.

Manjushri Bodhisattva said to Wisdom Accumulation, "Such is the work of teaching and transforming that I have done within the sea."

At that time, Wisdom Accumulation spoke these verses of praise:

*"O greatly wise, virtuous and courageous one,
You have taught and saved countless beings.
Now this great assembly and I
Have seen this for ourselves.
Proclaiming the Real Mark's principle,
Opening the Dharma of One Vehicle,
You are a guide for all living beings
Leading them quickly to Bodhi's realization."*

Manjushri said, "While in the sea, I have proclaimed and taught only *The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra!*"

Wisdom Accumulation asked Manjushri, "This Sutra is extremely profound and subtle. Among all the Sutras, it is a jewel rarely found in the world. Is there any living being who can, through diligence and vigor, cultivate this Sutra and quickly gain Buddhahood?"

Manjushri said, "There is a Dragon King's daughter who is just eight years old. She is the faculties, conducts, and Karmas of living beings and has attained Dharani. She is able to receive and uphold the entire storehouse of extremely profound secrets spoken by the Buddha. She has deeply entered Dhyana Samadhi and thoroughly penetrated all Dharmas. In the space of a Kshana she brought forth the Bodhi mind and attained to irreversibility. Her eloquence is unobstructed and she is compassionately mindful of all living beings as if they were her children. Her merit and virtue is complete. The thoughts of her mind and the words from her mouth are subtle, wonderful, and expansive. She is compassionate, humane and yielding; harmonious and refined in mind and will, and she is able to arrive at Bodhi."

Wisdom Accumulation Bodhisattva said, "I have seen the Thus Come One Shakyamuni practicing difficult ascetic practices throughout limitless aeons, accumulating merit and virtue as he sought Bodhi without ever resting. As I observe the three thousand great thousand worlds, there is no place, not even one the size of a mustard seed, where as a Bodhisattva he did not renounce his life for the sake of living beings. Only after that did he attain the Bodhi Way. I do not believe that this girl can accomplish proper enlightenment in the space of an instant.

They had not yet finished their daughter suddenly appeared before them, bowed with her head at their feet, and withdrew to one side to speak these verses:

*"Having deeply understood the marks
Of offenses and blessings,
By shining throughout the ten directions,
Now the wondrous, pure Dharma Body,
Is complete with the Thirty-two Marks and
The Eight Minor Characteristics.
The adorned Dharma Body
Is honored and looked up to by gods and humans,
And revered by all the dragons and spirits.
Of all the varieties of beings,
None fail to respect and revere it.
Hearing about the realization of Bodhi,
Which only a Buddha can certify to,
I proclaim the Great Vehicle teaching,
Which liberates suffering living beings."*

At that time, Shariputra spoke to the Dragon Girl, saying, "You claim quick attainment to the Supreme Path. This is difficult to believe. Why? The body of a woman is filthy and not a vessel for the Dharma. How can you attain to the Supreme Bodhi? The Buddha Path is remote and distant. Only after one has passed through limitless aeons, diligently bearing suffering and accumulating one's conduct, perfecting one's cultivation of all Paramitas, can one then attain realization. What is more, a woman's body has Five Obstacles: one, she cannot become a Brahma heaven king; two, she cannot become Shakra; three, she cannot become a Mara king; four, she cannot become a Wheel Turning Sage king; five, she cannot become a Buddha. How can a woman quickly realize Buddhahood?"

Now the Dragon Girl had a precious pearl, its worth equal to the entire system of three thousand great thousand worlds, which she took before the Buddha and presented to him. The Buddha immediately accepted it. The Dragon Girl then said to Wisdom Accumulation and the venerable Shariputra, "I just offered up this precious pearl and the World Honored One accepted it. Was that quick or not?"

"Very quick!" They answered.

The girl said, "With your spiritual powers, watch as I become a Buddha even more quickly than that!" At that moment, the entire assembly saw the Dragon Girl suddenly transform into a man and perfect the Bodhisattva conduct. Instantly she went off to the south, to the world without filth, where, seated on a jeweled lotus, she accomplished Equal and Proper Enlightenment and embodied the Thirty two Marks and Eighty Minor Characteristics. There, for the sake of all living beings throughout the ten directions, she proceeded to proclaim the wonderful Dharma.

While the Bodhisattvas, Sound Hearers, gods, dragon, and the rest of the Eightfold Division, both humans and non-humans in the Saha world all watched from a distance as the Dragon Girl became a Buddha and spoke the Dharma for all the gods and humans, they rejoiced exceedingly and reverently made obeisance from afar. Hearing that Dharma, limitless living beings understood and awoke, attaining to irreversibility. Countless living beings received predictions of the Way. The world without filth quaked in six ways, while in the Saha world, three thousand living beings came to dwell on the ground of irreversibility, and three thousand living beings brought forth the Bodhi mind and gained predictions.

Wisdom Accumulation Bodhisattva, Shariputra and the entire assembly silently believed and accepted.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN **EXHORTATION TO MAINTAIN**

At that time the Bodhisattva, Mahasattva Medicine King, and the Bodhisattva, Mahasattva Great Delight in speaking, along with a retinue of twenty thousand Bodhisattvas came before the Buddha and made the following vow: "We only pray that the World Honored One will not be concerned. After the Buddha's extinction, we will reverently maintain, read, recite, and explain this Sutra.

"In the future evil ages, as their good roots diminish, living beings will become increasingly arrogant, greedy for benefits and offerings, of increasingly unwholesome roots, far removed from liberation, and difficult to teach and transform. Still, we shall give rise to the great power of patience, read and recite this Sutra, maintain and speak it, write it out, and make various kinds of offerings to it, not sparing our very bodies and lives."

Then, the five hundred Arhats in the assembly who had received predictions, spoke to the Buddha saying, "World Honored One, we too vow to speak this Sutra extensively in other lands."

Again, those still study and those beyond study, eight thousand in number, who had received predictions, rose from their seats, placed their palms together, and facing the Buddha made this vow, "World Honored One, we too, will speak this Sutra extensively in other lands. Why? The people in the Saha world are for the most part evil, arrogant, of scanty merit and virtue, hateful, turbid, flattering, and deceitful their hearts untrue."

The Buddha's foster mother, the Bhikshuni Mahaprajapati, together with six thousand Bhikshunis, both those still studying and those beyond study, rose from their seats, singlemindedly joined their palms, and gazed at the Honored One's countenance without removing their eyes for an instant. The World Honored One then spoke to Gautami saying, "Why do you stare at the Thus Come One with such a worried expression? Are you not thinking of saying that I have not mentioned your name in connection with receiving a prediction for Anuttarasamyaksambodhi? Gautami, I included all of you when previously I conferred predictions upon all of the Sound Hearers. Now you wish to know about your prediction. In the future, within the Dharma of sixty-eight billion Buddhas, you shall be a great Dharma master. You and the six thousand Bhikshunis who are studying and who are beyond study shall all become Dharma masters. In this way you shall gradually perfect the Bodhisattva path and become a Buddha by the name of "Thus Come One Upon Whom All Beings Look With Delight," One Worthy of Offerings, of Right and Universal Knowledge, Perfect in Clarity and Conduct, Well-gone One Who Understands the World, Supreme Lord, Regulating Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, World Honored One. Gautami! The Buddha Upon Whom All Beings Look With Delight and the six thousand Bodhisattvas will successfully confer predictions for Anuttarasamyaksambodhi upon one another.

The Bhikshuni Yashodhara, Rahula's mother, then thought, "When conferring predictions, the World Honored One never mentioned my name."

The Buddha told Yashodhara, "In a future age, within the Dharma of hundreds of thousands of ten thousands of millions of Buddhas, you shall cultivate the Bodhisattva conduct as a great Dharma master, gradually perfecting the Buddha path. In the World 'Wholesome' you shall become a Buddha by the name of 'The Thus Come One Complete with Tens of Thousands of Radiant Marks.' One Worthy of Offerings, of Right and Universal Knowledge, Perfect in Clarity and Conduct, Well-gone, One Who Understands the World, Supreme Lord, Regulating Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, World Honored One. As a Buddha, your lifespan will be limitless Asankhyeya aeons.

At that time, the Bhikshuni Mahaprajapati and the Bhikshuni Yashodhara, together with their retinues, all rejoiced greatly, having gained what they never had. They spoke these verses in the presence of the Buddha:

*The World Honored One, Our leader,
Brings tranquillity to gods and humans:
Hearing this prediction
Our hearts know perfect peace.*

When they had finished speaking this verse, the Bhikshunis said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we too shall extensively proclaim this Sutra in other lands."

At that time, the World Honored One looked upon the eighty billion Nayutas of Bodhisattva Mahasattvas.

All of these Bodhisattvas were Avaivartikas who turned the irreversible Dharma wheel and who had attained all of the Dharanis. They immediately rose from their seats, went before the Buddha, singlemindedly with palms joined, and thought, "If the World Honored One were to command us to maintain and speak this Sutra, we would follow the Buddha's instruction and vastly proclaim this Dharma."

They further thought, "The Buddha is silent now and gives no command. What should we do?"

Then all the Bodhisattvas, reverently complying with the Buddha's will, and wishing to fulfill their own past vows, went directly before the Buddha, and uttered the lion's roar, proclaiming this vow: "World Honored One, after the Thus Come One's extinction, we shall circulate throughout the ten directions to lead living beings to copy out this Sutra, to receive, maintain, read and recite, and explain its meaning, to cultivate in accord with Dharma, and to keep it properly in mind--all through the awesome power of the Buddha. We only pray that the World Honored One although dwelling in another direction will lend us his protection from afar."

At that time, all the Bodhisattvas in unison raised their voices to speak verses saying:

*"Pray do not be concerned,
For after the Buddha's extinction
In the frightening evil age,
We will vastly preach.*

*Ignorant people
With evil mouth will revile us,
Or even beat us with knives or staves,
But we will endure it all.*

*Bhikshus in the evil age
With deviant knowledge and
Flattering, crooked minds,
Who claim to have gained what they have not,
Have minds filled with arrogance.*

*Some may appear to be Aranyakas,
For they wear rags and dwell in the wilds.
But although they claim to be on the true path,
They scorn those who live among people.
Coveting profit and offerings,
They will speak Dharma to the white-robed
And be held in reverence by the world
As Arhats with the Six Penetrations.
These people harbor evil thoughts,
Always thinking of vulgar, worldly matters.*

*Falsely calling themselves Aranyakas,
They will take delight in pointing out our faults,
Saying things like,
"All of these Bhikshus
Are greedy for profit and offerings,"
And so they preach externalist doctrines.
They have written the Sutras themselves
To deceive and confuse worldly people
All for the sake of reputation.
They will single out this Sutra
And in the midst of the multitudes
Slander us
Before the kings, ministers, Brahmans, and lay-people
And even to other Bhikshus.
Attempting to defame us, they will say,
"These are people of deviant views
Who preach an externalist doctrine."*

*Because we revere the Buddha,
We will enquire all of this evil.
For this we will be mocked
And people will flippantly say,
"All of you are Buddhas."
All such words of ridicule
We will patiently endure.
In the turbid aeon, in the evil age
When there will be much to fear,
Evil ghosts will possess others
In order to slander and insult us.
But, revering and trusting the Buddha,
We shall put on the armor of patience;
In order to speak this Sutra,
We shall endure all these difficulties.
Not cherishing body or life itself,
But caring only for the Supreme Path
We in the ages to come,
Will protect and uphold the Buddha's entrustment.
As the World Honored One himself knows,
In the turbid age, evil Bhikshus,
Not knowing of the Buddha's expedients
Whereby the Dharma is spoken appropriately,
Will frown and speak ill of us,
Repeatedly banishing us
From stupas and temples.
So will be the host of evils,*

*And yet, recollecting the Buddha's command,
We shall bear up under these events.*

*If there are those who seek the Dharma,
In the villages, cities, and towns,
We will go to those places
To speak the Dharma entrusted
To us by the Buddha.*

*We are the Buddha's attendants
Dwelling fearlessly among the multitudes,
We speak the Dharma skillfully,
And hope the Buddha will remain at peace.*

*We in the presence of the World Honored One,
And before the Buddhas who have come from the ten directions,
Make vows such as these,
And the Buddha himself knows our thoughts."*

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

HAPPILY-DWELLING CONDUCT

AT THAT TIME Dharma Prince Manjushri Bodhisattva Mahasattva said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, all these Bodhisattvas are extremely rare. Reverently complying with the Buddha, they have made great vows to protect, maintain, read, and speak this *Dharma Flower Sutra* in the future evil age.

"World Honored One, how should Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas speak this Sutra in the future evil age?"

The Buddha told Manjushri. "If a Bodhisattva Mahasattva wishes to speak this Sutra in the future evil age, he should dwell securely in four Dharmas. First, by dwelling in the Bodhisattva's range of practice and the Bodhisattva's range of association, he will be able to expound this Sutra for living beings.

"Manjushri, what is meant by the Bodhisattva Mahasattva's range of practice? If a Bodhisattva Mahasattva dwells on the ground of patience, is gentle and compliant, not impetuous or volatile; if his mind is not frightened; if, moreover, he does not practice in regard to any dharma, but contemplates the marks of all dharmas as they really are-not, however, practicing nondiscrimination-that is called the Bodhisattva Mahasattva's range of practice.

"What is meant by the Bodhisattva Mahasattva's range of association? Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas do not draw near to kings, princes, great ministers, or officials.

"They do not draw near to externalists-brahmacharins, *nirgranthas*, and the like-or to writers of worldly literature, to those who sing praises of externalist writings, to *lokayatas*, or to the opponents of *lokayatas*.

"They also do not draw near to violent amusements such as boxing and wrestling, to displays of martial arts that involve mutual attack, to *natas*, or to any entertainment that uses magic.

"They do not draw near to *chandalas*; to those who raise pigs, sheep, chickens, or dogs; or to those who hunt, fish, trap, or engage in any other evil activities. If such people should on occasion come to them, they speak the Dharma for them, but they have no expectations.

"They also do not draw near to those who seek to be Hearers, whether Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, or Upasikas, and they do not make a half bow to them. They do not remain in a room, a promenade, or a lecture hall with them. Should such people sometimes come to them, they speak Dharma as is appropriate, but seek nothing in return.

"Manjushri, moreover, Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas must not regard women's bodies as objects of desire and speak Dharma for them. They do not take delight in looking at women. If they enter the homes of others, they do not speak with young girls, maidens, widows, and so forth.

"Further, they do not draw near to the five kinds of unmanly men or become friends with them.

"They do not enter others' houses alone. If for some reason they must enter alone, they single-mindedly recollect the Buddha.

"If they speak the Dharma for women, they do not smile or laugh and let their teeth show, nor do they expose their chests. Even for the sake of the Dharma, they do not become familiar with them, much less for the sake of other matters!

"They take no delight in raising young disciples, Shramaneras, or children, and they do not take pleasure in sharing the same Master with them.

"They always delight in sitting in *dhyana* and, in a quiet place, cultivating collecting their thoughts. Manjushri, this is called the first range of association.

"Further, Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas contemplate all dharmas as empty, as characterized by actuality, as not upside-down, as not moving, as not retreating, as not turning, as being like empty space, as without a nature, as having the path of language cut off, as not coming into being, as not coming forth, as not arising, as without a name, as without an appearance, as in reality nonexistent, as measureless, as boundless, as unimpeded, and as unobstructed.

"They exist only because of causes and conditions and are produced from inversion. Therefore, it is said that constantly delighting in contemplating such characteristics of dharmas is called the second range of association of a Bodhisattva."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate his meaning, spoke the following verses:

*If there is a Bodhisattva,
In the future evil age,
Who, with a fearless mind,
Wishes to speak this Sutra,
He should enter the range of practice
And the range of association.
He should always stay away
From kings, as well as princes,
Great ministers and officials,
Brutal and dangerous performers;
From chandalas, along with
Externalists and brahmacharins.
He should not draw near to
Those of overweening pride
Who are attached to the Small Vehicle
And study the Three Stores.
Nor should he draw near to
Bhikshus who are breakers of the precepts,
Arhats in name only,
Or to Bhikshunis
Who like to play and laugh,
Those deeply attached to the five desires
Or seeking quiescence in the present.
Nor should he draw near Upasikas.
Should such people come
With good hearts
To the Bodhisattva
To hear of the Buddha Way,
The Bodhisattva, then, may
Without apprehension
And without expectations
Speak the Dharma for them.
He should not draw near
Widows, maidens
Or unmanly men,
Nor should he be familiar with
Or close to them.
He should also not draw near
Butchers, meat-cutters,*

*Hunters, or fishermen,
Or any who kill for profit
Or sell meat as their livelihood,
Or those who traffic in female flesh:
Such people as these
He should not draw near.
He should take care never
To draw near to those
Engaged in dangerous, violent sports,
Nor to actors and performers
Or prostitutes and the like.
He should not, while in a secluded place,
Speak the Dharma for women.
While speaking the Dharma,
He should not joke or laugh.
When he enters the city to seek alms,
He should go with another Bhikshu,
Or, if there is no other Bhikshu,
He should single-mindedly recollect the Buddha.
Those are what is called
The ranges of practice and association;
By resort to these two ranges
He can preach in peace and comfort.
Further, he does not practice
Higher, middle, or lower dharmas;
Nor conditioned or unconditioned dharmas,
Real or unreal dharmas.
He does not distinguish
Between men and women;
He does not obtain any dharma
Nor does he know or perceive any.
This is what is known as
The Bodhisattva's range of practice.
All the dharmas whatsoever
Are empty, nonexistent,
Without permanence,
Neither arising nor extinguished;
This is known as the Wise One's range of association.
It is through inverted discrimination
That dharmas exist or not exist,
Seem real or unreal,
Created or uncreated.
If, in a quiet place,
He cultivates and collects his thoughts
Peacefully dwelling, unmoved
Like Mount Sumeru,*

*Contemplating all dharmas
As having no existence,
Like empty space,
With nothing firm or solid,
Uncreated, not coming forth,
Unmoving, not retreating;
Dwelling always in one mark,
This is called the range of association.
If a Bhikshu,
After my Nirvana,
Enters into this range of practice
And range of association,
When he speaks this Sutra,
He will have no fear.
When a Bodhisattva
Enters a quiet room
And with upright mindfulness
Contemplates dharmas in accord with principle,
Arising from dhyana concentration
He may for the sake of kings,
Princes, ministers,
Brahmans and such
Teach, transform, and expound,
Speaking this Sutra
With a tranquil mind
And without fear.
Manjushri,
This is called the Bodhisattva's
Peaceful dwelling in the first Dharma,
And he may, in the future age,
Speak the Dharma Flower Sutra.*

"Manjushri, after the Tathagata's Nirvana, in the Dharma-ending Age, if one wishes to speak this Sutra, one should dwell in this happily-dwelling conduct.

"Whether one is expounding upon the Sutra orally or reading the Sutra itself, one should take no delight in speaking of the faults of people or of the Sutra, nor should one hold other Dharma Masters in contempt, nor speak of the good or bad qualities, the strengths or weaknesses of others. With regard to Hearers, one should not mention them by name in order to speak of their faults, nor should one speak of them by name to praise their excellence. One should not harbor resentment or jealousy.

"Because one skillfully cultivates such peaceful and happy thoughts, he will not oppose his listeners' intentions. If asked difficult questions, he does not answer by resorting to the Small Vehicle Dharma, but uses only the Great Vehicle for his explanation, which causes his listeners to obtain the wisdom of all modes."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate his meaning, spoke these verses, saying,

*The Bodhisattva ever delights
In tranquilly speaking the Dharma;
On pure ground
He arranges his seat,
Smears his body with oil,
And washes away dust and filth.
Wearing fresh, clean clothing,
Completely pure, within and without,
Seated securely on the Dharma seat,
He responds to questions.
If there are Bhikshus
Or Bhikshunis,
Upasakas
Or Upasikas,
Kings, princes,
Ministers, scholars, or commoners,
By resorting to the subtle, wonderful principle,
With harmonious mien he speaks for them.
If there are difficult questions,
He answers in accord with principle.
Using causes and conditions and parables,
He explains and makes distinctions.
Through his use of such expedients,
All are moved to bring forth the resolve,
Which gradually increases
As they enter into the Buddha Way.
Casting out thoughts of laziness
And slothful thinking,
Freeing himself from all worry,
He speaks Dharma with a compassionate mind.
By day and night he ever speaks
The supreme teaching of the Way.
By means of causes and conditions
And limitless analogies
He instructs living beings,
Leading them to be joyful.
Clothing, bedding,
Food, drink, and medicine -
With respect to these
He harbors no expectations.
His single focus is to speak the Dharma
According to causal conditions;
His wish is to realize the Buddha Way*

*And lead living beings to do the same.
This, then, is the greatest benefit:
The offering of peace and comfort.
After my Nirvana,
If there is a Bhikshu
Who is able to expound
Upon The Wonderfully Dharma Flower Sutra
With no thought of envy or anger,
With no affliction or obstruction,
He will have no worries
And no detractors.
He also will not fear
Knives or staves,
Nor will he be exiled,
Because he is secure in his patience.
The wise one is thus:
Cultivating well his mind,
He is secure in peace and comfort.
As I have explained above,
This person's merit and virtue
Cannot be exhaustively described
By means of number or parable
Throughout ten of millions of eons.*

"Further, Manjushri, in the future ending age, when the Dharma is about to become extinct, the Bodhisattva who receives, upholds, reads, or recites this Sutra should harbor no thoughts of envy, flattery, or deceit. He should also not ridicule or malign those who study the Buddha Way, nor should he seek their strengths or weaknesses. If there are Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, Upasikas, those who seek to be Hearers, Pratyekabuddhas, or those who seek the Bodhisattva Way, he should not torment them or cause them to have doubts by saying to them, "You are all very far from the Path, and you will never obtain the wisdom of all modes. Why not? Because you are careless and lax in the Way." Further, he should not frivolously discuss the Dharma for the sake of argument.

"He should give rise to thoughts of great compassion towards all living beings and think of all the Tathagatas as compassionate fathers, all Bodhisattvas as great Masters. Always, he should deeply revere and pay respect to all the great Bodhisattvas of the ten directions. He should speak Dharma in equal measure for all living beings. In accord with Dharma, he should speak neither too much nor too little; even to those who deeply love the Dharma, he should not speak too much.

"Manjushri, in the future age, when the Dharma is about to become extinct, it will be impossible to trouble or confuse a Bodhisattva Mahasattva who has accomplished this third happily-dwelling conduct when he is speaking the Dharma. He shall gain good fellow students with whom he may read and recite this Sutra. Large assemblies will

gather to listen to and accept it. Having heard it, they will uphold it; having upheld it, they will recite it; having recited it, they will be able to speak it; having spoken it, they will be able to write it out; to cause others to write it out; to make offerings to it; to revere, honor, and praise it."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate his meaning, spoke verses, saying:

*If one wishes to speak this Sutra
He should rid himself of envy, anger, and arrogance,
Flattery and deceitful thoughts.
His practice should be honest and straightforward;
He should not ridicule others
Or speak lightly of the Dharma,
Or cause others to have doubts
By telling them they shall not obtain Buddhahood.
When this son of the Buddha speaks the Dharma,
He is ever gentle, agreeable, and patient,
Compassionate towards all
And never slack in his efforts.
The great Bodhisattvas of the ten directions
Take pity on the multitudes and so practice the Way.
He should bring forth a heart of reverence,
Thinking, "These are my great teachers."
With regard to all the Buddhas, World Honored Ones,
He should think of them as his supreme fathers.
He should break through all thoughts of arrogance
And then speak the Dharma without obstacle.
Such is the third dharma,
Which the wise ones should always guard.
With single-minded happily-dwelling conduct,
One is revered by limitless multitudes.*

"Further, Manjushri, in the future Ending Age when the Dharma is about to become extinct, the Bodhisattva Mahasattva, who upholds the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, should give rise to thoughts of great kindness for those at home and those who have left home. He should give rise to thoughts of great compassion for those who are not Bodhisattvas.

"He should think, "People like this are missing a great deal. Although the Tathagata speaks the Dharma expediently and appropriately, they do not hear, know, or awaken to it. They do not inquire into it, believe it, or understand it.

"Although these people do not inquire into, believe, or understand this Sutra, still, when I attain *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*, wherever they happen to be, I shall use the power of spiritual penetrations and the power of wisdom to lead them to abide within this Dharma.

"Manjushri, after the Nirvana of the Tathagata, the Bodhisattva Mahasattva who, accomplishes this, the fourth dharma, shall be free from error when he speaks this Dharma.

"He will always receive offerings from and be revered, honored, and praised by Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, Upasikas, kings, princes, great ministers, common people, Brahmans, laypeople, and so on. The gods in empty space will always follow and serve him in order to hear the Dharma. If, in villages or cities, in the wilds or forests, someone wishing to pose difficult questions approaches him, all the gods, for the sake of the Dharma, will protect him day and night, and he will cause the listeners to be joyful.

"Why is this? This Sutra is protected by the spiritual powers of all the Buddhas of the past, present, and future.

"Manjushri, throughout limitless kalpas, it is not possible even to hear the name of the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, much less to see, receive, uphold, read, or recite it.

"Manjushri, it is like a powerful wheel-turning sage king who wishes to subdue other countries by force. But all the lesser kings do not follow his commands. The wheel-turning king then mobilizes his various troops and goes to punish them. Seeing his troops successful in warfare, he is greatly delighted and rewards them according to their merits, giving them fields, houses, villages, cities, counties; or else clothing; personal ornaments; or various precious treasures of gold, silver, lapis lazuli, mother-of-pearl, carnelian, coral, or agate; or elephants, horses, carriages, servants, or subjects.

"Only the bright pearl on his cowl, that alone, he does not give away. Why not? Only the king can wear this pearl on his crown. If he gave it away, the king's retinue would surely be greatly astonished.

"Manjushri, the Tathagata is also like this. Through the use of the powers of *dhyana* samadhi and wisdom, he has gained the country of the Dharma and is king of the three realms. Still, the demon kings refuse to submit. The Tathagata's generals, the worthy ones and sages, do battle with them. With those who are successful, he is delighted. For the four assemblies, he speaks the Sutras, causing their hearts to rejoice. He confers upon them the *dhyana* concentrations, the liberations, the lack of outflows, the roots and powers, and all the wealth of the Dharma. He further bestows upon them the city of Nirvana, telling them that they have attained cessation. He guides their thoughts, causing them all to rejoice.

"But he does not speak the *Dharma Flower Sutra*.

"Manjushri, eventually the wheel-turning king, seeing among his troops those who have been greatly successful, is overjoyed and at last gives them the incredible pearl, which he has long worn in his topknot and which he would never casually give away.

"So, too, is it with the Tathagata. As the great king of the Dharma within the three realms, he uses Dharma to teach and transform all living beings. Seeing the army of worthy ones and sages doing battle with the demons of the five *skandhas*, the demons of afflictions, and the demons of death, and being greatly successful extinguishing the three poisons, escaping the three realms, and rending the nets of the demons, the Tathagata is greatly pleased. He then speaks to them the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, which can lead living beings to All-Wisdom, which meets with resentment and disbelief in all the world, and which he has never spoken of before.

"Manjushri, the *Dharma Flower Sutra* is the foremost among the Tathagata's teachings. Among all the teachings it is the most profound, and it is only bestowed at the very end, just like that bright pearl which the powerful king long kept and then gave away. Manjushri, the *Dharma Flower Sutra* is the secret treasury of all the Buddhas, Tathagatas. Among all the Sutras it is the highest. In the long night of time it has been guarded and never recklessly expounded. Today, for the first time, I am speaking it for you."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses saying,

*Always practicing patience,
And being merciful to all,
One will then be able to proclaim
This Sutra praised by the Buddhas.
In the future Ending Age,
One who upholds this Sutra,
Should bring forth kindness and compassion
For those at home, those who have left home,
And those who are not Bodhisattvas,
Thinking, "Those who do not hear
Or believe this Sutra
Suffer a great loss.
When I have gained the Buddha Way
I shall use expedients
To speak this Dharma for them
So they may abide within it."
It is like a powerful
Wheel-turning king
Who bestows rewards
Upon soldiers successful in battle:
Elephants, horses, carriages,
Personal ornaments,
As well as fields, houses,
Villages, cities, and counties.
Or he may give clothing
Or various rare treasures,*

*Servants or other valuables,
Giving them joyfully.
Should there be a hero
Who can do difficult deeds,
The king will take from his topknot
His bright pearl, and give it to him.
The Tathagata is also thus.
As king of all the Dharmas,
With patience, great power
And the precious store of wisdom,
With great kindness and compassion,
He transforms the world according to the Dharma.
He sees all people
Suffering pain and agony,
Seeking liberation,
And battling with the demons.
For these living beings
He speaks various Dharmas.
Using great expedients,
He teaches them the Sutras.
Once he knows that living beings
Have become strong,
Then at the very end
He speaks the Dharma Flower for them.
This is like the king who unties his topknot
And gives away his bright pearl.
Highest among the host of Sutras,
This Sutra is venerable.
I always guard and protect it
And never speak it recklessly.
But now the time is exactly right
To speak it for all of you.
After my extinction,
Those who seek the Buddha Way,
Who wish to gain peace and ease,
And to proclaim this Sutra
Should draw near
Such dharmas as these four.
Those who read this Sutra
Will have no worries or afflictions;
They will be free from the pain of sickness,
With a countenance fresh and clear.
They won't be born poor,
Lowly, or ugly.
Living beings will be happy to see them,
As if they were longed-for sages.*

*All the children of the gods
Will act as their messengers.
Knives and staves will not hurt them,
Poison will not harm them,
And should someone revile them,
His mouth will be stopped.
They shall roam fearlessly
Like the lion king.
The light of their wisdom
Will shine like the sun.
In dreams they will see
Only wonderful things.
They may see the Tathagatas
Seated on their lion thrones,
Surrounded by a host of Bhikshus
As they speak the Dharma.
They will also see the dragons, spirits,
Asuras and so forth,
In number like the Ganges' sands,
Reverent, with palms joined.
They will see themselves appearing
To speak the Dharma for them.
Further, they will see all the Buddhas,
Their bodies of golden hue
Emitting limitless light,
Illumining all,
And proclaiming all the Dharmas
With the Brahma sound.
The Buddhas, for the fourfold host,
Will speak the supreme Dharma.
They shall see themselves there, too,
With palms joined, praising the Buddhas.
Hearing the Dharma, they will rejoice
And make offerings.
They will gain the dharanis
And certify to non retreating wisdom.
The Buddhas, knowing their minds
Have deeply entered the Buddha Way,
Will then bestow upon them a prediction
For the realization of the most proper enlightenment,
Saying, "You, Good Men
Shall in the future age
Attain limitless wisdom
And the Great Way of the Buddha.
Your lands shall be adorned and pure,
Vast and incomparable,*

*And the four assemblies there
Will listen to the Dharma with palms joined."
They will also see themselves
Dwelling in the mountain forests,
Practicing wholesome dharmas,
Certifying to the Real Mark,
Deeply entering dhyana concentration,
And seeing the Buddhas of the ten directions.
The Buddhas, with golden bodies,
Will be adorned with the marks of a hundred blessings.
Hearing their Dharma, they will speak it to others
And always have good dreams like these.
They will also dream of being a king
Who forsakes his palace and retinue,
As well as fine objects of the five desires,
To enter a Bodhimanda.
There, beneath the Bodhi tree,
They sit upon the lion throne,
Seeking the Way for seven days,
And gaining the Buddha's wisdom.
After realizing the supreme Way,
They rise and turn the Dharma wheel
And speak the Dharma for the fourfold host.
Throughout thousands of myriads of millions of eons,
They speak the nonoutflow wondrous Dharma,
And save limitless living beings.
Later they enter Nirvana,
As a lamp goes out when its fuel is gone.
If, in the future evil age,
They can speak this foremost Dharma,
They shall gain great benefit,
Merit, and virtue as told above.*

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

WELLING FORTH FROM THE EARTH

AT THAT TIME, in the great assembly, the Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas, who had come from other lands in numbers exceeding the grains of sand in eight Ganges Rivers, rose, placed their palms together, made obeisance, and said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, if you will allow us, after the Buddha's Quiescence, here in this Saha World we will with ever-increasing vigor protect, maintain, read, recite, write out, and make offerings to this Sutra, and we will proclaim it far and wide throughout this land."

The Buddha then told the host of Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas, "Stop! Good men, you do not need to protect and maintain this Sutra. Why not? Within my Saha World itself there are Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas equal in number to the sands of sixty thousand Ganges

Rivers, each of whom has a retinue equal in number to the sands of sixty thousand Ganges Rivers. After my quiescence, all of them will protect, uphold, read, recite, and vastly proclaim this Sutra."

Just as the Buddha said this, the earth in the three thousand great thousand lands in the Saha World trembled and split open, and from its midst limitless thousands of tens of thousands of millions of Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas simultaneously welled forth.

All of these Bodhisattvas possessed golden-hued bodies, the thirty-two marks, and limitless light.

They had been dwelling beneath the Saha World in the space belonging to this world.

Upon hearing the sound of Shakyamuni Buddha's voice, all the Bodhisattvas came up from below.

Each one of the Bodhisattvas was a leader who instructed and guided a great multitude. Each had a retinue numbering as many as the sand grains of sixty thousand Ganges Rivers. Still others had retinues numbering as many as the sand grains of fifty thousand, forty thousand, thirty thousand, twenty thousand, or ten thousand Ganges Rivers. Others had retinues numbering as many as the sand grains of one Ganges River, one half a Ganges River, one fourth, and on down to one thousandth of a ten thousandth of a millionth of a *mayuta* of a Ganges River.

Others had retinues numbering in the billions of *mayutas*. Others had retinues numbering in the hundreds of millions. Others had retinues numbering in the tens of millions, the millions, and on down to the tens of thousands. Others had a thousand or a hundred and on down to ten. Others had five, four, three, or two disciples, down to one disciple. Still others came alone, preferring isolation. And so it was that their numbers were limitless and boundless, beyond the power of calculation or analogy to make known.

Having welled forth from the earth, all the Bodhisattvas went to the Wonderful Stupa of Seven Jewels in space, where the Thus Come One Many Jewels and Shakyamuni Buddha were. Arriving there, they turned toward the two World Honored Ones and bowed with their heads at those Buddhas' feet. They went on to where all the Buddhas were seated on lion thrones beneath jeweled trees, bowed to them, circumambulated them three times to the right, put their palms together respectfully, and praised them with various Bodhisattva praises. Then they withdrew to one side and gazed joyfully at the two World Honored Ones.

From the time the Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas first welled forth from the earth, and while they praised the Buddhas with various Bodhisattva praises, a period of fifty small eons elapsed. During that time, Shakyamuni Buddha remained seated in silence, and the four assemblies were silent for fifty small eons as well.

Because of the Buddha's spiritual power, all in the great assembly thought only half a day had passed. At that time the four assemblies were also able, because of the Buddha's spiritual power, to see all the Bodhisattvas completely filling the space of limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of lands.

Among the multitudes of Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas were four leaders. The first was named Superior Practice, the second was named Boundless Practice, the third was named Pure Practice, and the fourth was named Secure Practice. These four Bodhisattvas, among the assembly, were the foremost leaders, the spokesmen and guides. Before the great multitudes, they joined their palms together, contemplated Shakyamuni Buddha, made deep bows from the waist and said, "World Honored One, are you in good health and free from worry? Are you peaceful and happy in your practice? Are those who should be crossed over receptive to the teaching? They do not cause the World Honored One any weariness, do they?"

The four Great Bodhisattvas then spoke verses, saying:

*Is the World Honored One happy and at peace,
Free from worry and disease?
In teaching and transforming beings,
Is he free from weariness?
And further, do living beings
Receive transformation easily?
They do not cause the World Honored One
To become fatigued, do they?*

The World Honored One then, in the midst of the great host of Bodhisattvas, said this: "So it is, so it is, good men. The Thus Come One is peaceful and happy, free from disease and worry. All the living beings are easy to transform and take across, and they do not cause me weariness. Why is this? All these living beings, in lifetime after lifetime, have always received my teaching, and they have also paid reverence to and venerated the Buddhas of the past, thereby planting the roots of goodness. When these living beings first saw me and heard my teaching, all, except for those who had formerly cultivated and studied the Small Vehicle, immediately believed and accepted it and entered the Thus Come One's wisdom. I now lead even such people as these to hear this Sutra and to enter the Buddha's wisdom."

At that time the Great Bodhisattvas spoke these verses:

*Good indeed, good indeed,
Great Hero, World Honored One,
That all the living beings
Are easy to transform and save,
That they can ask about the Buddha's deep wisdom
And, having heard it, believe and practice it.
We all rejoice accordingly.*

Then the World Honored One praised the leaders of all those Great Bodhisattvas: "Good indeed, good indeed, that you good men have brought forth a heart of rejoicing in accord with the Thus Come One."

At that time Maitreya Bodhisattva and the Bodhisattvas in the multitudes, numbering as many as the sand grains in eight thousand Ganges Rivers, all had this thought: "From of old, we have never seen or heard of these great Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas who have welled forth from the earth and who are standing before the World Honored One, joining their palms, making offerings, bowing from the waist, and inquiring after his welfare."

Then Maitreya Bodhisattva Mahasattva, knowing the thoughts in the minds of the Bodhisattvas and others, numbering as many as the sand grains in eight thousand Ganges Rivers, and wishing as well to resolve his own doubts, placed his palms together, faced the Buddha, and spoke verses.

*These limitless thousands of myriads of kotis of
Bodhisattvas form a great host,
Such as we have never seen before.
We pray the Doubly Complete Honored One
Will tell us where they came from
And why they are gathered here.
They have huge bodies, great spiritual penetrations,
And inconceivable wisdom.
They are solid in resolve and will,
And possess the great power of patience.
Living beings delight in seeing them.
But where did they come from?
Each and every Bodhisattva
Has brought a retinue
Limitless in number,
Like the Ganges sand grains.
Some of the Great Bodhisattvas
Lead retinues of beings as many as
The sand grains in sixty thousand Ganges Rivers.
Such are the great assemblies
Single-mindedly seeking the Buddha Way.
These Great Masters,
In number like the sand grains in sixty thousand Ganges Rivers,
Have all come to make offerings to the Buddha
And to protect and uphold this Sutra.
Those with retinues comprised of as many as the sand grains in fifty
thousand Ganges Rivers
Are even more in number.
Those with retinues numbering forty, or thirty thousand,
Twenty, down to ten thousand,
One thousand, one hundred,*

*And so forth, down to the sand grains of a single Ganges River,
And those with a half, a third, or a quarter thereof,
Down to one ten thousandth of a millionth thereof
Or one thousandth of a ten thousandth of a nayuta thereof,
And the ones with tens of thousands of millions of disciples, on down to
half a million,
Are even more numerous.
There are also those with hundreds of tens of thousands, or tens of
thousands,
Thousands, or hundreds,
Fifty, or ten,
Down to three, two, or one,
And those who come alone without a retinue,
Preferring isolation— All these come before the Buddha
In numbers surpassing those just stated.
So large is the assembly,
That were one to count them
For eons numbering more than Ganges sand grains,
Still one could not fully know them.
Who spoke the Dharma for
All these of great awesome virtue -
This vigorous host of Bodhisattvas -
Teaching, transforming, and bringing them to accomplishment?
Under whom did they first bring forth their resolve?
Whose Buddhadharma do they praise and proclaim?
Whose sutras do they receive, uphold, and practice?
And which Buddha's Way do they cultivate?
Such are the Bodhisattvas' powers
Of spiritual penetrations and great wisdom,
That throughout the four directions,
The earth quakes and splits open,
And they rise out of it.
World Honored One, from of old,
I have never seen such a thing.
Pray tell us the names
Of the countries they come from.
I am always roaming through the lands,
But I have never seen this assembly.
I do not recognize
A single one of them.
Suddenly they have welled forth from the earth.
Pray explain the reason why.
Now in this great assembly,
The limitless hundreds of thousands of millions
Of Bodhisattvas all
Wish to understand this event:*

*The causes and conditions, first to last,
Of this host of Bodhisattvas.
O World Honored One of limitless virtue,
We only pray you will resolve the assembly's doubts.*

At that time all the division bodies of Shakyamuni Buddha, who had come from limitless thousands of myriads of *kotis* of lands in other directions, sat in lotus posture on lion thrones beneath jeweled trees throughout the eight directions. The attendants of those Buddhas, seeing this great assembly of Bodhisattvas of the three thousand great thousand worlds welling forth from the earth in the four directions and dwelling in space, each said to his respective Buddha, "World Honored One, where have all the limitless, boundless *asamkhyeyas* of Bodhisattvas in this great host come from?"

Each of those Buddhas then told his attendants, "All of you good men, just wait one moment! There is a Bodhisattva Mahasattva named Maitreya, upon whom Shakyamuni Buddha has bestowed a prediction that he shall be the next Buddha. He has already asked about this matter, and the Buddha is about to answer him. For this reason, you may all hear about it."

Shakyamuni Buddha then said to Maitreya Bodhisattva, "Good indeed, good indeed, Ajita, that you can ask the Buddha about such a great matter.

"You should all single-mindedly don the armor of vigor and bring forth a firm resolve.

"The Thus Come One now wishes to disclose and proclaim the wisdom of all Buddhas, the power of all Buddhas' sovereignty and spiritual penetrations, the power of all Buddhas' lion sprint, and the power of all Buddhas' awesome courage and mighty strength."

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate these principles, spoke verses:

*You should be vigorous and single-minded,
For I wish to speak about this matter.
Hold no doubts or regrets.
The wisdom of the Buddhas is inconceivable
Bring forth, now, the power of faith,
And abide in patience and goodness,
For the Dharma which from of old has never been heard,
You are now about to hear.
I am comforting you now,
So have no doubt or fear.
The Buddhas never speak falsely,
And their wisdom cannot be measured.
That foremost Dharma they have gained
Is extremely profound, beyond discerning.*

*As such, it should now be explained,
And you should single-mindedly listen.*

The World Honored One, having recited those verses, then said to Maitreya Bodhisattva, "In this great assembly, I now make this announcement to all of you: Ajita! These incalculable *asamkhyeyas* of great Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas, who have welled forth from the earth and whom you have never seen before, are those whom I taught, transformed, and guided in this Saha World after I attained *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*. I tamed and subdued the minds of these Bodhisattvas, causing them to bring forth the resolve for the Way.

"All of these Bodhisattvas live in the space beneath the Saha World. They have read and recited all the Sutras until they have penetrated them thoroughly. They have pondered their meanings in detail and have been properly mindful of them.

"Ajita! All these good men take no delight in dwelling with the multitudes or in much talk. They always enjoy living in quiet places where they practice with diligence and vigor, never resting. They do not take up residence with humans or gods.

"They always delight in deep wisdom and have no obstacles. They also always delight in the Dharmas of all Buddhas. With single-minded vigor they seek supreme wisdom."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying:

*Ajita, you should know,
For countless eons,
All these Great Bodhisattvas
Have cultivated and practiced the Buddhas' wisdom.
I taught them all,
Causing them to bring forth the great resolve for the Way.
They are all my disciples.
Dwelling in this world system,
Ever practicing the work of dhuta,
They delight in quiet places.
Renounce the bustle of crowds,
And take no delight in much talk.
These disciples
Study and practice the Dharma of my Way.
Vigorous always, day and night,
They seek the Buddha Way.
They dwell in the space
Beneath this Saha World,
Solid and powerful in resolve and will.
They are ever diligent, seeking wisdom.
They speak various wonderful Dharmas,*

*With no fear in their hearts.
In the city of Gaya,
Sitting beneath the Bodhi tree,
I realized the most proper enlightenment
And turned the supreme Dharma-wheel.
Only then did I teach and transform them,
Causing them first to bring forth the resolve for the Way.
Now they all dwell in irreversibility,
And shall all become Buddhas.
I now speak the truth;
You should believe it with a single mind.
For endless eons,
I have taught and transformed these multitudes.*

At that time Maitreya Bodhisattva Mahasattva and the countless Bodhisattvas gave rise to doubts in their minds. Puzzling over this unprecedented occurrence, they thought, "How could the World Honored One, in such a short space of time, have taught and transformed such limitless, boundless, asamkhyeyas of Great Bodhisattvas and caused them to dwell in anuttarasamyaksambodhi?"

Just then they spoke to the Buddha, saying, "World Honored One, when the Thus Come One was a crown prince, he left the Shakya palace and went to a place not far from the city of Gaya where he sat in the Bodhimanda and realized *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*. From that time until now, only forty-some years have elapsed. How, in such a short space of time, could the World Honored One have done such great Buddha work—using the Buddha's mighty power and the Buddha's merit and virtue to teach and transform such limitless hosts of Great Bodhisattvas so that they can realize *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*?

"World Honored One, the multitudes of Great Bodhisattvas are such that if a person were to try to count them throughout thousands of myriads of millions of eons, he could not finish or reach their limit. For endless eons in the presence of limitless, boundless numbers of Buddhas, they have planted good roots and accomplished the Bodhisattva Way, always cultivating Brahma conduct.

"World Honored One, a matter such as this is hard for those in the world to believe.

"It is as if, by way of analogy, there were a handsome man, twenty-five years old and with shiny black hair, who pointed to hundred-year-old men and said, 'These are my sons.' Then suppose the hundred-year-old men pointed to that young man and said, 'He is our father, the one who begot and reared us.' Such a thing would be hard to believe.

"The Buddha is also like this. It has really not been long since he attained the Way. On the other hand, the great hosts of Bodhisattvas have already, throughout limitless thousands of myriads of millions of eons, practiced with diligence and vigor for the sake of the Buddha Way. They are well able to enter, leave, and dwell in limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of samadhis. They have attained great spiritual powers

and have long cultivated Brahma conduct. They are well able to practice in succession all wholesome dharmas, and their questions and answers are clever. They are jewels among humankind, extremely rare in the world. Yet, just now, the World Honored One said that only when the Buddha attained the Way did he cause them to first bring forth the resolve. By teaching, transforming, and guiding them, he led them toward *anuttarasam yaksambodhi*.

It has not been long since the World Honored One attained Buddhahood, and yet he has been able to do these great and meritorious deeds!

"We believe that the Buddha speaks in accord with what is appropriate, that the Buddha has never spoken falsely, that the Buddha's understanding is complete and penetrating.

"However, when Bodhisattvas who have just brought forth the resolve hear these words after the Buddha's Quiescence, they may not believe or accept them. On the contrary, they may give rise to the causes and conditions for the offense karma incurred in destroying the Dharma.

"This being the case, World Honored One, we hope that you will explain in order to dispel our doubts, and so that those good people of the future who hear of this matter also will not give rise to doubts."

At that time, Maitreya Bodhisattva, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying:

*In the past, the Buddha of the Shakyān line
Left home and drew near the city of Gāyā
To sit beneath the Bodhi tree,
And it has not been long since then.
All these disciples of the Buddha,
Incalculable in their number,
Have long practiced the Buddha Way
And now dwell in the power of spiritual penetrations.
Well have they studied the Bodhisattva Way.
Undefined by worldly dharmas,
Like a lotus flower floating on the water,
They have welled forth from the earth.
All give rise to reverent hearts,
As they stand before the World Honored One.
Such a thing is hard to conceive of,
How can it be believed?
The Buddha only recently attained the Way,
Yet his accomplishments are so very many.
Please dispel the doubts of the assembly
And tell us how this can actually be.
It is as if a strong young man,
Only twenty-five years of age,*

*Pointed to hundred-year-old men
With white hair and wrinkled faces
And said, "These are my sons."
And the sons also said, "He is our father."
A father so young with sons so old
Is a thing hard for the world to believe.
The World Honored One is also like this;
He has only recently attained the Way
And all these Bodhisattvas
Of firm resolve, neither weak nor indecisive,
Throughout limitless eons
Have practiced the Bodhisattva Way.
Clever in answering difficult questions,
They have no fear in their minds.
Resolute in their patience,
They are upright and proper, possessing awesome virtue.
Praised by the Buddhas of the ten directions,
Skilled in their ability to distinguish and explain,
They take no delight in being with the multitudes,
But always prefer Dhyana concentration.
Because they seek the Buddha Way,
They have been dwelling in the space below.
Hearing this from the Buddha,
We have no doubts about this matter,
But we hope that the Buddha will, for those of the future,
Give explanations to cause them to understand.
For if they were to give rise to doubts
And fail to believe this Sutra,
They would thereupon fall into the evil paths.
Presently we have asked for this explanation
Of these limitless Bodhisattvas
And how, in such a short space of time,
You have taught and transformed them,
Causing them to bring forth the resolve
And to dwell on the Ground of Irreversibility.*

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE THUS COME ONE'S LIFE SPAN

AT THAT TIME the Buddha spoke to the Bodhisattvas and the entire great assembly, saying, "Good men, you should believe and understand the sincere and truthful words of the Thus Come One." Once again he told the great assembly, "You should believe and understand the sincere and truthful words of the Thus Come One." He again told the great assembly, "You should believe and understand the sincere and truthful words of the Thus Come One."

Then the great assembly of Bodhisattvas, headed by Maitreya, placed their palms together and spoke to the Buddha, saying, "World Honored One we only pray that you will speak. We shall believe and accept the Buddha's words." They repeated this three times.

Again they said, "We only pray that you will speak. We shall believe and accept the Buddha's words."

At that time the World Honored One, knowing that the Bodhisattvas would not stop with three requests, spoke to them, saying, "You should listen attentively.

"The Thus Come One's power of spiritual penetrations is acknowledged by all gods, humans, and *asuras* in the world. They say that Shakyamuni Buddha, having left the palace of the Shakyani clan and having gone to a place not far from the city of Gaya to sit in the Bodhimanda, has now attained *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*.

"However, good men, I actually realized Buddhahood limitless, boundless, hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of *nayutas* of eons ago.

"Suppose a person were to grind into fine motes of dust five hundred thousand myriads of *kotis* of *nayutas* of *asamkhyeyas* of three thousand great thousand world systems. Then, suppose he traveled to the east across five hundred thousand myriads of *kotis* of *nayutas* of *asamkhyeyas* of lands, and there he deposited one mote of dust. Suppose he continued in this way, traveling to the east, until all the motes of dust were gone.

"Good men, what do you think? Could the number of worlds he passed through be reckoned or counted?"

Maitreya Bodhisattva and the others all said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, those world systems would be limitless, boundless, beyond calculation, and beyond the power of the mind to know. All the Hearers and Pratyekabuddhas, using their nonoutflow wisdom, could not conceive of them or know their limit or number.

"We now dwell on the ground of *avaivartika*, but we cannot comprehend this matter, World Honored One, and so such world systems would be limitless and boundless."

At that time the Buddha spoke to the great hosts of Bodhisattvas, saying, "Good men, I shall now explain this clearly for you. If all these world systems whether a dust mote was deposited in them or not were reduced to dust motes, and if each dust mote were an eon, the time that has passed since I became a Buddha would exceed even that by hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of *nayutas* of *asamkhyeyas* of eons.

"From that time on, I have always remained in the Saha World, speaking the Dharma to teach and transform beings. Also, in other places, in hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of *nayutas* of *asamkhyeyas* of lands, I have guided and benefited living beings.

"Good men, in that interval, I spoke of the Buddha Dipankara and others, and I further spoke of them as entering Nirvana, but those were just discriminations made expediently.

"Good men, if a living being comes before me, I observe with my Buddha eye his faith and other qualities, as well as the keenness or dullness of his faculties, and I take him across in an appropriate manner.

"In all places, although the names by which I refer to myself are different and I may be older or younger, I also appear and announce that I am about to enter Nirvana. I also employ various expedient devices, speaking the subtle and wonderful Dharma and enabling living beings to bring forth happiness in their minds.

"Good men, the Thus Come One, seeing living beings delighting in lesser dharmas, beings of scanty virtue and heavy defilements, speaks for these people, saying, 'When young, I left the home-life and attained *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*. ' In truth, however, I became a Buddha a long time before that. I speak in this way merely as an expedient to teach and transform living beings and to cause them to enter the Buddha Way.

"Good men, the Sutras proclaimed by the Thus Come One are all for the purpose of saving and liberating living beings. He may speak of his own body, or he may speak of someone else's body. He may manifest in his own body, or he may manifest in someone else's body. He may manifest his own affairs, or he may manifest the affairs of others, but all that he says is true and not false.

"What is the reason for this? The Thus Come One knows and sees the triple realm as it really is. There is no birth or death, no retreating or advancing, no existence in the world or passage into quiescence. There is no reality or unreality, no likenesses or differences. He views the triple realm as not being the triple realm. Matters such as these, the Thus Come One clearly sees, without mistake or error.

"Living beings have various natures, various desires, various modes of conduct, and various ideas, thoughts, and discriminations. Wishing to lead them to produce the roots of goodness, he employs divers causes and conditions, analogies, and expressions to explain the various dharmas, carrying out the Buddha's work without respite.

"Thus since I realized Buddhahood in the very remote past, my life span has been limitless *asamkhyeyas* of eons, eternal and never extinguished. Good men, the life span I realized when formerly practicing the Bodhisattva path has not yet been exhausted and is twice that of the above number.

"As I now proclaim that I am about to enter quiescence, I am not really passing into quiescence. The Thus Come One uses this passing only as an expedient to teach and transform living beings.

"For what reason? If the Buddha were to stay in the world a long time, those of scanty virtue who do not plant good roots, who are poor and lowly, who covet the objects of the

five desires, and who are caught in the net of schemes and false views, seeing the Thus Come One constantly present and not entering stillness, would become arrogant, lax, and indifferent. They would not consider how difficult it is to encounter him, nor would their hearts be reverent.

"For these reasons, the Thus Come One expediently says, 'Bhikshus, you should know that it is difficult to meet with a Buddha appearing in the world.' What is the reason? Those of scant virtue may pass through limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of eons, during which time they may or may not see a Buddha. Because of that, I tell them, 'Bhikshus, the Thus Come One is difficult to get to see.' These living beings, hearing such words, will necessarily realize how difficult it is to get to encounter the Buddha and will cherish a longing for him. They will then plant good roots. That is why the Thus Come One, although he does not enter stillness, speaks of quiescence.

"Further, good men, the Dharma of all Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, is like this and is used to save living beings. It is entirely true and not false.

"It is as if there were a good physician, wise and well versed in the medical arts and intelligent, who is skillful at healing the multitude of sicknesses. The man also has many sons ten, twenty or even a hundred. Then, called away on business, he travels to a far-off country.

"Meanwhile, the children drink some poison, which causes them to roll on the ground in delirium.

"Just then their father returns home. Because they drank the poison, some of the sons have lost their senses, while others have not. Seeing their father at a distance, they are all greatly happy. They bow to him, kneel, and inquire after him. 'Welcome back in peace and safety. In our foolishness, we took some poison by mistake. We pray that you will rescue and heal us, and will restore our lives to us.'

"Seeing his children in such agony, the father consults his medical texts and then searches for fine herbs of good color, aroma, and flavor. He then grinds, sifts, and mixes them together, and gives the compound to his sons to take.

"And he says to them, 'This is an excellent medicine of good, color, aroma, and flavor. Take it. Your agony will be relieved, and you will suffer no further torment.'

"Some among the children have not lost their senses. Seeing the fine medicine with its good color and aroma, they immediately take it and their sickness is completely cured.

"Although the others who have lost their senses rejoice in their father's arrival, have inquired after his well-being, and have sought to be cured of their illnesses, they refuse to take the medicine. What is the reason? The poisonous vapors have entered them so deeply that they have lost their senses, and so they say that the medicine of good color and aroma is not good.

"The father then thinks, 'How pitiful these children are! The poison has confused their minds. Although they rejoice to see me and ask me to rescue and cure them, still they refuse such good medicine as this. I should now set up an expedient device to induce them to take this medicine. '

"Immediately he says, 'You should know that I am now old and weak, and my time of death has arrived. I will now leave this good medicine here for you to take. Have no worries about not recovering.' Having instructed them in this way, he then returns to the far-off country and sends a messenger back to announce, 'Your father is dead.'

"When the children hear that their father is dead, their hearts are struck with grief, and they think, 'If our father were here, he would be compassionate and pity us, and we would have a savior and protector. Now he has forsaken us to die in another country, leaving us orphaned, with no one to rely upon.' Constantly grieving, their minds then become awakened. They understand that the medicine has good color, aroma, and flavor. They take it immediately, and their poisonous sickness is completely cured.

"The father, hearing that his sons have been completely cured, then comes back, and they all see him.

"Good men, what do you think, could anyone say that this good physician has committed the offense of false speech?

"No, World Honored One. "

The Buddha said, "I, too, am like that. I realized Buddhahood limitless, boundless, hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of *nayutas* of *asamkhyeyas* of eons ago. For the sake of living beings, I employ the power of expedients and say that I am about to enter quiescence. There is no one who can rightly say that I have committed the offense of false speech."

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying,

*From the time I attained Buddhahood,
The eons that have passed
Are limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads
Of kotis of asamkhyeyas in number.
I always speak the Dharma to teach and transform
Countless millions of living beings,
So they enter the Buddha Way.
And throughout these limitless eons,
In order to save living beings,
I expediently manifest Nirvana.
But in truth I do not pass into quiescence.
I remain here, always speaking the Dharma.*

*I always stay right here,
And using the power of spiritual penetrations,
I cause inverted living beings,
Although near me, not to see me.
The multitudes see me as passing into quiescence.
They extensively make offerings to my sharira.
All cherish ardent longing for me,
And their hearts look up to me in thirst.
Living beings, then faithful and subdued,
Straightforward, with compliant minds,
Single-mindedly wish to see the Buddha,
Caring not for their very lives.
At that time I and the Sangha assembly
All appear together on Magic Vulture Mountain,
Where I say to living beings
That I am always here and never cease to be.
But using the power of expedient devices
I manifest "ceasing" and "not ceasing" to be.
For living beings in other lands,
Reverent, faithful, and aspiring,
I speak the Unsurpassed Dharma.
But you who do not hear this
Think that I have passed into quiescence.
I see living beings
Sunk in misery, and yet
I refrain from manifesting for them
In order to cause them to look up in thirst,
Then, when their minds are filled with longing,
I emerge and speak the Dharma.
With such powerful spiritual penetrations,
Throughout asamkhyeyas of eons,
I remain always on Magic Vulture Mountain
And also dwell in other places.
When beings see the eon ending
And ravaged by the great fire,
My land is peaceful and secure,
Always filled with gods and humans,
Gardens and groves, halls and pavilions,
And various precious adornments.
There are jeweled trees with many flowers and fruits
Where living beings roam in delight.
The gods play celestial drums,
Always making various kinds of music,
And mandarava flowers
Are scattered on the Buddha and the great assembly.
My Pure Land is not destroyed,*

*But the multitudes see it being burned entirely.
Worried, terrified, and miserable,
Such ones are everywhere.
All these beings with offenses,
Because of their evil karmic causes and conditions,
Pass through asamkhyeyas of eons,
Without hearing the name of the Triple Jewel.
All who have cultivated merit and virtue,
Who are compliant, agreeable, and honest
They all see me
Here, speaking the Dharma.
Sometimes for this assembly,
I speak of the Buddha's life span as limitless.
To those who see the Buddha only after long intervals,
I speak of the Buddha as being difficult to meet.
The power of my wisdom
The unlimited illumination of my wisdom
Is such that my life span is one of countless eons
Attained through long cultivation and work.
Those of you with wisdom,
Should not have doubts about this.
Cut them off entirely and forever,
For the Buddha's words are real, not false.
They are like the clever expedients of the physician
Who, to cure his insane children,
Is actually alive, yet says he is dead,
And none can say that he speaks falsely.
I, too, am like a father to the world,
Saving all from suffering and woe.
But to living beings, inverted as they are,
I speak of cessation, although I actually remain.
Otherwise, because they often see me,
They would grow arrogant and lax.
Unruly and attached to the five desires,
They would tumble into the evil paths.
I am ever aware of living beings
Those who practice the Way and those who do not.
I speak various Dharmas for their sakes
To save them in an appropriate manner.
I am always thinking,
"How can I cause living beings
To enter the Unsurpassed Way
And to quickly perfect the body of a Buddha?"*

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

DISCRIMINATION OF MERIT AND VIRTUE

AT THAT TIME, when the assembly heard the Buddha describe the number of eons in the length of his life span, limitless, boundless *asamkhyeyas* of living beings gained great benefit.

The World Honored One then said to the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Maitreya, "Ajita! When I spoke of the great length of the Thus Come One's life span, living beings to the number of sand grains in six hundred and eighty myriads of *kotis* of *nayutas* of Ganges Rivers gained Patience with the Nonproduction of Dharmas.

"Again, a thousand times that number of Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas gained the *dharani-door* of hearing and upholding.

"Again, Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas to the number of dust motes in a single world system gained the unobstructed eloquence of delight in speech.

"Again, Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas to the number of dust motes in a single world system gained the *dharani* of a hundred thousand myriad *kotis* of limitless revolutions.

"Again, Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas to the number of dust motes in a great world system became capable of turning the irreversible Dharma-wheel.

"Again, Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas to the number of dust motes in a middle-sized world system were enabled to turn the pure Dharma-wheel.

"Again, Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas to the number of dust motes in a small world system were destined to gain *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* after eight lifetimes.

"Again, Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas to the number of dust motes in four sets of four continents were destined to gain *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* after four lifetimes.

"Again, Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas to the number of dust motes in three sets of four continents were destined to gain *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* after three lifetimes.

"Again, Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas to the number of dust motes in two sets of four continents were destined to gain *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* after two lifetimes.

"Again, Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas to the number of dust motes in one set of four continents were destined to gain *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* after a single lifetime.

"Again, living beings to the number of dust motes in eight world systems all brought forth the resolve for *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*."

As the Buddha proclaimed these great advantages in the Dharma that the Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas had attained, there rained from space *mandarava* flowers and *mahamandarava* flowers, which floated down and settled upon the Buddhas seated on lion thrones beneath limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of jeweled

trees, as well as upon Shakyamuni Buddha and Many Jewels Thus Come One, who had entered Nirvana long ago, both of whom were seated on the lion throne within the stupa of seven treasures. The flowers also settled upon the great Bodhisattvas and the fourfold assembly.

There also rained down finely ground *chandana* powder and aloeswood incense. Heavenly drums in space sounded of themselves, and their wonderful sounds reached far and wide. There also rained down thousands of kinds of heavenly garments strung with beads, as well as laces of real pearls, laces of *mani* pearls, and laces of As-You-Will pearls that covered the nine directions. Another offering to all in the great assembly was priceless incense burning in a multitude of precious censers, so that its scent naturally pervaded the great assembly and its surroundings.

Above each Buddha were Bodhisattvas holding aloft banners and canopies in a procession that extended clear up to the Brahma Heavens. All the Bodhisattvas, with wonderful sounds, sang limitless chants in praise of all Buddhas.

At that time Maitreya Bodhisattva rose from his seat, uncovered his right shoulder, placed his palms together, and said to the Buddha:

*The Buddha speaks the rare Dharma,
Such as we have never heard before.
The World Honored One has great power,
And his life span is without limit.
Countless disciples of the Buddha,
Hearing the World Honored One discriminate
And tell of those who gain the Dharma's benefit,
Have been filled with joy.
Some dwell on the irreversible ground.
Some gain the dharanis.
Others gain unobstructed delight in speech,
Or myriads of millions of dharanis of revolution.
As many Bodhisattvas
As dust motes in a great world system
All gain the ability to turn
The irreversible Dharma-wheel.
Again, Bodhisattvas in number
To the dust motes in a middle world system
All gain the ability to turn
The pure Dharma-wheel
Again. Bodhisattvas in number
To the dust motes in a small world system
Are destined to gain the Buddha Way
After eight more lifetimes.
Again, Bodhisattvas in number
To the dust motes in four, three, or two*

*Sets of four continents shall gain
Buddhahood after a respective number of lives.
Further, Bodhisattvas in number
To the dust motes in one set of four continents
Shall accomplish All-Wisdom
After one more lifetime.
Living beings such as these,
Hearing of the vast length of the Buddha's life,
Gain limitless, nonoutflow,
Pure rewards as retribution.
Again living beings in number
As the dust motes in eight worlds,
Hearing the Buddha speak of his life span,
All bring forth the supreme mind.
The World Honored One speaks limitless,
Inconceivable Dharmas,
Bringing many benefits,
As boundless as space itself.
Heavenly mandarava flowers
And mahamandarava flowers rain down.
From countless Buddhlands
Come Shakras and Brahmas like the Ganges sands;
Chandana and aloeswood incense
Filter through the air,
Falling in profusion
Like flocks of birds flying down from the sky,
Scattered as an offering to the Buddhas,
In empty space, heavenly drums
Make magnificent sounds by themselves,
While thousands of tens of thousands of heavenly garments
Come whirling and swirling down.
Wonderful censers studded with jewels
Burn with priceless incense,
Which naturally pervades the surroundings
As an offering to the World Honored Ones.
The great assembly of Bodhisattvas
Hold banners and canopies made of seven treasures,
High and splendorous, of a million varieties,
In a procession that reaches the Brahma heavens.
And before each Buddha
Hang jeweled flags and banners of victory,
As myriads upon myriads of verses are used
To praise and laud the Thus Come Ones:
All such things as these
As never have been seen before.
Hearing of the Buddha's limitless life span,*

*All are filled with joy.
The Buddha's name pervades the ten directions.
He vastly benefits living beings, All of whom perfect good roots
And are helped to bring forth the supreme mind.*

At that time the Buddha told Maitreya Bodhisattva Mahasattva, "Ajita! If there are living beings who, on hearing that the Buddha's life span is as long as this, can bring forth even a single thought of faith and understanding, the merit and virtue they will gain is measureless and limitless.

"If a good man or a good woman, for the sake of *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*, were to practice the five *paramitas*: *dana-paramita*, *shila-paramita*, *kshanti-paramita*, *virya-paramita*, and *dhyana-paramita*; all except *prajnaparamita* throughout eighty myriads of millions of *nayutas* of eons...

"... the merit and virtue he or she would derive if compared with that of the previous person's would not come to a hundredth part, nor to a thousandth, nor to a hundred thousand myriad millionth part, nor could it be known by resort to calculation or analogy.

"For a good man or a good woman possessing merit and virtue such as this, to retreat from *anuttarasam yaksambodhi* would be simply impossible."

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses saying,

*If someone wished to seek the Buddha's wisdom
Throughout eighty myriads of millions
Of nayutas of kalpas,
Practicing the five paramitas
Throughout all those eons,
He would give by making offerings to the Buddhas,
The Pratyekabuddha disciples,
And to the hosts of Bodhisattvas.
His gifts might be rare and precious food and drink,
Fine clothing, and bedding.
He might give pure abodes made of chandana
And adorned by gardens and groves.
Gifts such as these,
Varied and fine,
Throughout this number of eons,
He would dedicate to the Buddha Way.
Further he might hold the prohibitive precepts purely,
Without flaw or fault,
Seeking the supreme path,
Praised by all the Buddhas.
Again, he might practice patience,*

*Dwelling on the Ground of Compliance,
So that should evil befall him,
His mind would not be disturbed.
Also if those who have gained the Dharma,
But who harbor overweening pride,
Ridicule and torment him,
He would be able to bear it.
He might be diligent and vigorous,
Ever solid in his resolve,
Throughout limitless millions of eons,
Single-minded and never lax.
And for countless eons he might
Dwell in a tranquil place,
Ever collecting his thoughts, avoiding sleep,
While either sitting or walking.
Because of these causes and conditions,
He would then give rise to dhyana concentration,
So that for eighty millions of myriads of eons,
His mind would be secure and unconfused.
Blessed with this single-mindedness,
He would seek the unsurpassed path, saying,
"May I gain All-Wisdom
And exhaust the limits of dhyana concentrations."
This person, for hundreds of thousands
Of tens of millions of eons,
Might practice such meritorious virtues
As told above.
But should there be a good man or woman
Who, hearing me speak of my life span,
Gives rise to even a single thought of faith,
His or her blessings will exceed those of the person just described.
Any person who can be completely free
Of doubts and misgivings
And, with deep thought, believe for but an instant,
Will reap blessings such as those.
Should there be Bodhisattvas
Who have practiced the Way for limitless eons
And who hear me speak of my life span,
They shall be able to believe and accept it.
Persons such as these
Will receive this Sutra atop their heads,
Vowing, "May we in the future
Gain long lives and save living beings.
Just as today the World Honored One,
King of the Shakyas, In the Bodhimanda puts forth the lion's roar,
Speaking the Dharma without fear,*

*So may we in lives to come
Be revered by all
And, while seated in the Bodhimanda,
Speak of our life spans in the same way."
Should there be those who deeply believe,
Who are pure and straightforward,
With much learning and dharanis,
Who explain the Buddhas' words according to the doctrine
Persons such as these
Will have no doubts about this matter.*

"Further, Ajita, if anyone hears of the long duration of the Buddha's life span and understands the import of these words, the merit and virtue such a one gains will be without boundary or limit, for it shall enable one to give rise to the supreme wisdom of the Thus Come One.

"How much the more so will this be the case for one who can listen to this Sutra extensively; ask others to listen; uphold it oneself; ask others to uphold it; write it out oneself; ask others to write it out; or use flowers, incense, beads, banners, flags, silk canopies, fragrant oils, or butter lamps to make offerings to this Sutra. Such a person's merit and virtue will be limitless and boundless, for it shall enable that person to give rise to the Wisdom of All Modes.

"Ajita! If a good man or good woman hears of the long duration of the Buddha's life span and with a deep mind believes and understands, he or she will then see the Buddha ever-present on Mount Gridhrakuta together with the great Bodhisattvas and the assembly of Hearers surrounding him as he speaks the Dharma. He or she will also see the Saha world's soil become lapis lazuli. It will be flat and even, with eight major roads bordered with Jambunada gold and lined with jeweled trees. Adjacent to the roads will be pavilions and towers all made of jewels, wherein hosts of Bodhisattvas dwell. To behold in this way is indicative of deep faith and understanding.

"Further, after the passing into stillness of the Thus Come One, if a person hears this Sutra and does not defame it but instead rejoices over it, you should know that that indicates he already has deep faith and understanding.

"How much the more so is this the case for one who reads, recites, receives, and upholds it.

"This person carries the Thus Come One on the top of his head.

"Ajita! This good man or good woman need not build stupas or temples for me, nor build Sangha dwellings, nor make the four kinds of offerings to the Sangha. Why not? This good man or good woman, in receiving, upholding, reading, and reciting this Sutra, has already built stupas, erected Sangha dwellings, and made offerings to the Sangha. He has built stupas of the seven treasures for the Buddha's *sharira*. The stupas are high and

broad, tapering up to the Brahma Heavens, hung with banners and canopies. He has also offered many jeweled bells, flowers, incense, beads, ground incense, paste incense, and burning incense, as well as many drums, musical instruments, pipes, flutes, reeds, various dances, and praises sung with wonderful sounds. He has already made such offerings throughout limitless thousands of myriads of millions of eons.

"Ajita! If, after my passing into stillness, a person, hearing this Sutra, can receive and uphold it, write it out, or ask others to write it out...

"...he will thereby have built Sangha dwellings and made thirty-two halls of red *chandana*, eight *tala* trees in height, high, broad, and adorned, with hundreds and thousands of Bhikshus dwelling within them, filled also with gardens, groves, bathing ponds, pathways, *dhyana* caves, clothing, food, drink, bedding, medicines, and musical instruments. Such Sangha dwellings, halls, and pavilions uncountable hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of them shall be uncountable in number and shall manifest as an offering before me and the Bhikshu Sangha. Therefore I say that after the Thus Come One's entry into stillness, if a person receives, upholds, reads, recites, or explains this Sutra to others, if he writes it out, asks others to write it out, or makes offerings to this Sutra, he need not further build stupas, monasteries, or Sangha dwellings, nor need he make offerings to the Sangha.

"How much the more so does this apply to a person who can uphold this Sutra and at the same time practice giving, holding precepts, patience, vigor, single-mindedness, and wisdom.

"His virtue shall be supreme, limitless, and unbounded. Just as space to the north, east, south, west, the intermediate points, the zenith, and the nadir is limitless and boundless, so too this person's merit and virtue shall be limitless and boundless, and he shall speedily attain to the Wisdom of All Modes.

"A person may read, recite, receive, and uphold this Sutra, explain it to others, write it out, or ask others to write it out, and he may further build stupas or Sangha dwellings. He may make offerings to and praise the Sangha of Hearers, and laud the merit and virtue of the Bodhisattvas in hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of ways. Further he may explain the meanings in the *Dharma Flower Sutra* to others while according with their various causes and conditions. In addition he may uphold the precepts purely, dwell in harmony with people, be patient and without anger, and be of solid resolve and mindfulness. He may always value sitting in *dhyana*, obtaining deep concentration. He may be vigorous and heroic, gathering in all good dharmas. He also may possess keen faculties and wisdom, and be skillful at answering questions.

"Ajita! If there is a good man or good woman who, after my passing into stillness, is able to receive, uphold, read, and recite this Sutra and who also is able to amass these other good deeds and meritorious virtues, such a person has already turned towards the Bodhimanda, has drawn near to *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*, and is seated beneath the tree of the Way. Ajita! Wherever such a good man or good woman is, whether he or she is

sitting, standing, or walking, one should build a stupa at that place, and all gods and humans should make offerings to it as if it were a stupa of the Buddha."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying,

*If a person, after my passing,
Can reverently uphold this Sutra,
His blessings shall be unlimited,
As described above.
For he will have then completed
All manner of offerings,
And built sharira-stupas
Adorned with the seven treasures,
With towers high and broad,
Tapering up to the Brahma Heavens,
Hung with millions and millions of jeweled bells,
Making wonderful sounds in the wind.
And also, throughout limitless eons,
He shall have made offerings to this stupa
Of flowers, incense, beads,
Heavenly garments, and all kinds of music.
He shall have burnt fragrant oil in butter lamps,
Which shine brightly all around.
In the evil age, during the Dharma's demise,
He who can uphold this Sutra,
Will then, as mentioned above,
Have perfectly made all these offerings.
If a person can uphold this Sutra,
It will be as if in the presence of the Buddha himself
He used oxhead chandana
To build Sangha dwellings as offerings to him.
These thirty-two halls,
Eight tala trees in height,
Replete with fine food, clothing,
And bedding, wherein
Hundreds of thousands may dwell,
Will be amply adorned with gardens, groves, bathing ponds,
Pathways, and dhyana caves.
He may, with faith and understanding,
Receive, uphold, read, recite, and write,
Or request others to write,
And make offerings to this Sutra,
Scattering flowers, incense, and scented powder,
And constantly burning lamps with fragrant oils
Made of sumana, champaka, and atimuktaka.*

*He who makes such offerings
Gains limitless merit and virtue.
Just as empty space is boundless,
So shall his blessings be.
How much greater is the merit
Of he who upholds this Sutra,
Who also gives, holds precepts,
Who is patient and takes delight in dhyana samadhi,
Who is never hateful or foul-mouthed,
And who is reverent in stupas and temples,
Humble towards the Bhikshus,
Far-removed from arrogance,
And ever-thinking on wisdom.
He may refrain from anger
When asked difficult questions
But be compliant in making explanations.
He who can perform such practices
Shall have limitless merit and virtue.
If one sees a Dharma Master
Accomplish virtues such as these,
One should scatter heavenly flowers,
Offer him heavenly garments,
Bow with one's head at his feet,
And think of him as one would a Buddha.
One should further think,
"Soon he will arrive at the Bodhimanda,
Attain to no-outflows the unconditioned
And broadly benefit gods and humans."
Wherever such a person stays,
Walks, sits, or reclines,
Or speaks but a single verse,
One should build a stupa,
Wonderfully fine and adorned,
And make all kinds of offerings to it.
The disciple of the Buddha, dwelling in this place,
Enjoys it as would the Buddha,
Always abiding therein,
Walking, sitting, or reclining.*

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

REJOICING IN ACCORD WITH MERIT AND VIRTUE

AT THAT TIME, Maitreya Bodhisattva Mahasattva spoke to the Buddha, saying, "World Honored One, if a good man or a good woman hears this *Dharma Flower Sutra* and rejoices in accord with it, how much blessedness will he or she attain?"

He then spoke this verse:

*After the World Honored One's ultimate quiescence,
If one hears this Sutra,
And can accordingly rejoice,
How much blessedness will he gain?*

The Buddha then told the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Maitreya, "Ajita! After the passing into stillness of the Thus Come One, if a Bhikshu, Bhikshuni, Upasaka, Upasika, *or any person with wisdom*, whether young or *old*, having heard this Sutra and rejoiced accordingly, leaves the Dharma assembly and goes to another place, be it a Sangha dwelling or a tranquil place, a city, a street, a town, or a village, and expounds it to the best of his ability to his father, mother, relatives, good friends, and acquaintances, and if, having heard it, they then rejoice in accord with it and further transmit the teaching to others who, having heard it, rejoice in accord and likewise transmit it, and this process goes on reaching to fifty people Ajita, I will now tell you about the merit and virtue of that fiftieth good man or good woman who rejoices in accord. Listen well!

"Suppose in four million *kotis* of *asamkhyeyas* of worlds, among living beings in the six destinies and of the four kinds of birth egg-born, womb-born, moisture-born, and transformationally born those with form, those without form, those with thought, those without thought, those not totally endowed with thought, those not totally lacking thought, those without legs, those with two legs, those with four legs, those with many legs, and so forth, there is a person seeking blessings who gives to them whatever enjoyable things they desire, giving each being an entire Jambudvipa full of gold, silver, lapis lazuli, mother-of-pearl, carnelian, coral, and amber, rare and precious gems, as well as elephants, horses, carriages, palaces, and pavilions made of the seven treasures.

"This great almsgiver in this way bestows gifts for a full eighty years. Then he thinks, 'I have already given living beings these enjoyable things in accord with their desires. However, these living beings are old and worn out, over eighty years old, with white hair and wrinkled faces. Their time of death is not far off. I should instruct them by means of the Buddhadharma.'

"He then gathers the beings together and expounds the Dharma to them to instruct them, bringing them benefit and delight so that they all at once gain the path of Srotaapanna, the path of Sakridagamin, the path of Anagamin, and the path of Arhatship, exhausting all outflows, obtaining comfort in all of the deep Dhyana concentrations, and perfecting the eight liberations.

"What do you think? Would the merit and virtue of this great almsgiver be great or not?"

Maitreya said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, this person's merit and virtue would be extremely great, measureless, and unbounded. If the almsgiver had only given the beings all the playthings, his merit and virtue would be unlimited. How much the more so would it be if he enabled them to attain the fruit of Arhatship!"

The Buddha told Maitreya, "I will now tell you plainly: The merit and virtue obtained by this person, who gives playthings to living beings in the six destinies in four million *kotis* of *asamkhyeyas* of worlds and who further causes them to obtain the fruit of Arhatship, does not equal the merit of the fiftieth person who hears but a single verse of the *Dharma Flower Sutra* and rejoices in accord with it. His merit does not equal a hundredth part, a thousandth part, a hundred thousand myriad millionth part, and so forth until it cannot be known by resort to calculation or analogy.

"Ajita! The merit and virtue of the fiftieth person who hears in his turn the *Dharma Flower Sutra* and who rejoices in accord with it is limitless, boundless, and uncountable. How much the more so is the merit and virtue of one who is among the first to hear it in the assembly and who rejoices in accord with it. That person's blessings are even more supreme, unlimited, unbounded, and uncountable beyond comparison.

"Further, Ajita, if a person for the sake of this Sutra goes to a Sangha dwelling and, whether sitting or standing, hears and accepts it for but an instant, by reason of that merit and virtue, in his next rebirth he will acquire the finest elephant and horse carriages and jeweled palanquins, and will even ride in heavenly palaces.

"Again, if a person is seated in a place where the Dharma is being lectured, and when another person comes along, he encourages that person to sit and listen to it or shares his seat with him, the former person will, through his merit and virtue, in his next rebirth gain the seat of Shakra, the seat of a Brahma King, or the seat of a wheel-turning sage king.

"Ajita! If, further, a person says to another, 'There is a Sutra by the name of *Dharma Flower*. Let's go together and listen to it,' and taking that person's advice, the second person goes and hears it but for a moment,, the former person's merit and virtue will be such that in his next life he will be born in the same place as the Dharani Bodhisattva. He will have keen faculties and wisdom.

"For one hundred thousand myriad lifetimes he will never be mute, his breath will not stink, his tongue will always be free from disease, and his mouth will also be free from disease. His teeth will not be dirty, black, yellow, or wide-spaced, not missing or falling out, not uneven or crooked. His lips will not be pendulous, twisted or pursed, rough, chapped, or covered with sores, or split. They will not be askew, thick or large, or black, and there will be nothing repulsive about them. His nose will not be flat, thin, crooked, or out of joint. His face will not be dark, thin, concave, or crooked, or in any way unpleasant.

"His lips, tongue, and teeth will all be beautiful; his nose long, high, and straight. His face will be handsome, his eyebrows high and long, his forehead broad and even. Thus his human features will be perfect.

"In life after life, wherever he is born he will see the Buddhas, hear the Dharma, and believe and accept the teachings.

"Ajita, look at this: If the merit and virtue gained from exhorting a single person to go listen to the Dharma is such as this, how much greater is that of one who singlemindedly listens to the teachings, reads and recites them, and in the great assembly explains them in detail to others, and cultivates accordingly."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying,

*Suppose a person in the Dharma assembly
Gets to hear this Sutra,
Even just a single verse,
And rejoices in accord, and speaks it to others,
And thus the teaching is passed on
Until it reaches the fiftieth hearer.
The blessings gained by this last person
I will now set forth in detail.
Suppose there is a great almsgiver
Who presents gifts to uncountable multitudes,
Of all the things they desire,
For a full eighty years.
Seeing them old and worn,
With white hair and wrinkled faces,
Their teeth sparse, their bodies withered,
He thinks, "They will die before long.
I should now instruct them,
That they may obtain the Fruit of the Path."
Then he expediently explains to them
The true Dharma of Nirvana:
"The world is not a secure place.
It's like foam, water bubbles, or a will-o'-the-wisp.
All of you should quickly
Produce thoughts of revulsion for it."
The people, on hearing the Dharma,
All attain Arhatship,
Perfect the Six Spiritual Penetrations,
The Three Clarities, and the Eight Liberations.
The last, fiftieth, person,
Who has heard a single verse and rejoiced in accord with it,
Gains blessedness which exceeds that of the former,
Beyond the power of analogy to express.
If the blessedness of the one who hears it in turn
Is so unlimited,
How much greater is that of he who, in the assembly,
Was the first to hear it and rejoice.
Suppose a person exhorts another
And leads him to listen to the Dharma Flower,*

*Saying, "This Sutra is profound and wonderful,
 Hard to encounter in a thousand myriad eons,"
 And suppose that person, persuaded, goes to listen,
 And hears it for even just a moment.
 Of the reward of blessings of the first person,
 I will now speak in detail.
 Life after life, his mouth will have no illness.
 His teeth will not be wide-spaced, yellow, or black.
 His lips will not be thick, pursed, or split,
 Nor will his appearance be repulsive.
 His tongue will not be dry, black, or short.
 His nose will be high, long, and straight.
 His forehead will be broad and even,
 His visage upright and splendid,
 So that all will rejoice upon seeing him.
 His breath will never stink,
 But the fragrance of the utpala flower
 Will always issue from his mouth.
 If he goes to a Sangha dwelling
 Wishing to hear the Dharma Flower Sutra
 And, hearing it but for a moment, then rejoices,
 I will now tell of his blessings.
 He shall later be born among gods and humans,
 Acquire fine elephant and horse carriages and
 Precious, jeweled palanquins
 And will even ride in heavenly palaces.
 If, in a place where the Sutra is lectured,
 He encourages another to sit down and listen,
 By virtue of his blessings, he will gain
 The seat of Shakra, Brahma, or a wheel-turning king.
 How much greater will the blessings be of one who single-mindedly listens
 And explains the Sutra's meaning,
 Cultivating it as he preaches
 His blessings shall know no limit.*

CHAPTER NINETEEN **THE MERIT AND VIRTUE OF A DHARMA MASTER**

AT THAT TIME the Buddha told the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Ever-Vigorous, "If a good man or a good woman receives and upholds the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, whether reading it, reciting it, explaining it to others, or writing it out, that person will obtain eight hundred meritorious virtues of the eyes, twelve hundred meritorious virtues of the ears, eight hundred meritorious virtues of the nose, twelve hundred meritorious virtues of the tongue, eight hundred meritorious virtues of the body, and twelve hundred meritorious virtues of the mind. By means of these meritorious virtues, he adorns his six faculties, causing them all to become pure.

"This good man or woman, thus purifying the ordinary physical eyes that he or she was endowed with at birth, will see throughout the three thousand great thousand world system, inside and out, all the mountains, forests, rivers and seas, below to the Avici hells, and above to the Peak of Existence. Such a person will also see all the living beings therein, as well as their karmic causes and conditions, rewards and retributions, and places of birth. All of those he will see and know."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying,

*If, within the great assembly,
One speaks this Dharma Flower Sutra
With a heart free of fear,
Listen to me tell of his merit and virtue:
This person will gain eight hundred
Supreme meritorious virtues of the eyes,
And because of this adornment,
His eyes will be very clear and pure.
With the eyes given him from birth,
He will see throughout the three thousand great thousand world system,
Inside and out, Mount Meru,
Sumeru, and the Iron Ring Range;
As well as the other mountains and forests;
The waters of the great seas, rivers, and streams;
Below to the Avici hell;
Above to the Peak of Existence;
And all the living beings within All of this he will completely see.
Although he has not yet gained the Heavenly Eye,
His flesh eyes will have powers such as these.*

"Furthermore, Ever-Vigorous, if a good man or a good woman receives and upholds this Sutra, whether reading it, reciting it, explaining it to others, or writing it out, that person will obtain twelve hundred meritorious virtues of the ears. With his pure ears he will hear throughout the three thousand great thousand world system, inside and out, below to the Avici hell and above to the Peak of Existence, all the various sounds and voices, such as sounds of elephants, horses, cows, and carriages; sounds of sobbing and sighing; sounds of conches, drums, gongs, and bells; sounds of laughter and talking; sounds of men, women, boys, and girls; sounds of Dharma and nonDharma; sounds of suffering and joy; sounds of common people and sages; sounds of happiness and unhappiness; sounds of gods, dragons, *yakshas*, *gandharvas*, *asuras*, *garudas*, *kinnaras*, and *mahoragas*; sounds of fire, water, wind; sounds of hell-beings, animals, and hungry ghosts; sounds of Bhikshus and Bhikshunis; sounds of Hearers, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Buddhas. In general, although he has not yet obtained the Heavenly Ear, by using the pure ordinary ears given to him at birth, he can hear and know whatever *sounds there may* be inside and outside the three thousand great thousand world system. In this way he distinguishes between all the various sounds, and still his hearing is not impaired."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying,

*The ears he was born with
Are pure and without filth.
With his ordinary ears he hears
Sounds of the three thousand great thousand world system:
Sounds of elephants, horses, carriages and cows;
Gongs, bells, conches and drums;
Sounds of lutes and harps;
Sounds of pipes and flutes; and
Sounds of clear, fine chants.
He hears these, but is not attached to them.
Hearing the sounds of countless kinds of people,
He can understand them all.
He also hears the sounds of the gods
Their subtle, elegant voices raised in song.
He also hears the sounds of men and women,
The sounds of young boys and girls,
As well as the kalavinka sound
Coming from the mountains, streams, and deep ravines.
He hears all the sounds
Of the jiva-jivaka and other birds,
The bedlam of misery and pain in the hells
The sounds of all the torture there.
He hears the sounds of hungry ghosts, driven by hunger and thirst
As they seek for food and drink, and
The mighty roar put forth
By all of the asuras
As they dwell beside the sea,
Bickering among themselves.
In this way, one who speaks the Dharma
Can dwell securely there and hear
The faraway multitude of sounds,
And yet there is no harm to his hearing.
Throughout all the ten directions,
Birds and beasts cry out to one another.
The one who speaks the Dharma
Can hear them one and all.
As for the sounds and speech of the Brahma gods,
The Light Sound gods, and those of Pervasive Purity,
Up to the Heaven of the Peak of Existence,
The Dharma Master here in the world
Can hear them one and all.
The entire assembly of Bhikshus
And Bhikshunis,*

*Whether reading or reciting Sutras,
Or speaking them for others,
The Dharma Master dwelling here
Can hear them one and all.
Further, all the Bodhisattvas
Reading or reciting this Sutra-Dharma,
Or speaking it for others,
Or compiling commentaries on its meaning,
All such sounds as these,
He hears in detail.
All the Buddhas, great sagely honored ones,
Teaching and transforming living beings
In the midst of the great assemblies,
Expounding upon the subtle, wondrous Dharma,
Can be heard by one who holds the Dharma Flower.
All the sounds inside and out
Of the three thousand great thousand world system,
Below to the Avici hell,
And above to the Heaven of the Peak of Existence
Can each and every one be heard
And still his hearing is not harmed.
Since his ears are keen and sharp,
He can discern them all.
The one who upholds the Dharma Flower,
Although he has not yet gained the Heavenly Ear,
Merely using the ears he was born with,
Already has meritorious virtues such as these.*

"Further, Ever-Vigorous, if a good man or a good woman receives and upholds this Sutra, whether reading it, reciting it, explaining it to others, or writing it out, he will accomplish eight hundred meritorious virtues of the nose. With his pure nose he will smell throughout the three thousand great thousand world system, above and below, inside and outside, all the various fragrances: the scents of the *sumana*, *jatika*, *mallika*, *champaka*, and *patala* flowers; scents of red, blue, and white lotus flowers; scents of flowering and fruit-bearing trees; scents of *chandana*, aloe-wood, *tamalapatra*, and *tagara*; and scents of a thousand myriad kinds mixed together, whether powdered, in lumps, or in paste. One who upholds this Sutra, dwelling in this place, can distinguish all of these.

"Again, he can further distinguish the scents of living beings: the scents of elephants, horses, cows, sheep, and so forth; scents of men, women, boys, and girls; as well as scents of grasses, trees, thickets, and forests. All these scents, whether near or far, he can smell and distinguish without mistake.

"Although one who upholds the Sutra dwells here, he can smell the scents of all the gods in the heavens, the scents of the *parijataka* and *kovidara* trees, as well as the scents of the *mandarava*, *mahamandarava*, *manjushaka*, and *mahamanjushaka* flowers; the scents of

chandana and aloe-wood powder and various kinds of powdered incense; and assorted floral scents. Of all these heavenly scents, or fragrances arising from the blending of them, there are none he will not smell and know.

"Further, he will smell the scents of the god's bodies, the scent of Shakra Devanam Indra in his supreme palace as he enjoys the pleasures of the five desires, or his scent when, from the Wonderful Dharma Hall, he speaks the Dharma for the gods of the Trayastrimsha Heaven, or his scent when he plays in his gardens, as well as the scents of the bodies of other gods or goddesses. All these he can smell from afar.

"In the same way, up to and including the Brahma realms and the Peak of Existence, he can smell the scents of all the gods and at the same time smell the incense burned by the gods, the scent of Hearers, the scent of the Pratyekabuddhas, the scent of the Bodhisattvas, and the scent of the Buddhas. All of these he can smell from afar and know where they are. Although he smells these fragrances, his sense of smell is not harmed and makes no mistakes. Should he wish to distinguish and explain them for others, his memory will not fail him."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying:

*This person's nose is pure,
And within the world,
All odors, fragrant or fetid,
He can completely smell and know.
Sumana and jatika,
Tamala and chandana,
The scents of aloe-wood and cassia,
The scents of various flowers and fruits,
The scents of living beings,
The scents of men and women
The speaker of Dharma, at a distance,
Smells them and knows where they are.
The great and mighty wheel-turning kings,
The minor wheel-turners and their sons,
Ministers and courtiers
By their scents, he knows where they are.
The jewels worn on the body,
The jewel treasures in the earth,
The Wheel-Turning King's jeweled women
Smelling their scents, he knows where they are.
The ornaments adorning people's bodies,
Their clothing, beads,
Various kinds of perfumes
Smelling their scents, he knows where they are.
The gods, whether walking or sitting*

*Or playing with their spiritual transformations
The upholder of the Dharma Flower,
Having smelled their scents, knows them all.
The trees with their flowers and fruits,
The fragrance of clarified butter
The one who holds the Sutra, dwelling here,
Knows the location of them all.
In the deep recesses of the mountains,
The chandana trees in bloom
And the beings dwelling therein
Smelling their scents, he knows them all.
The living beings on Iron Ring Mountain,
In the great seas, or in the earth
By their scents, the holder of this Sutra
Knows the location of them all.
The male and female asuras
And their retinues,
Their quarrels and their play
By smelling their scents, he can know them.
In the wilds or ravines,
Lions, elephants, tigers, and wolves,
Wild oxen, and water buffalo
Smelling their scents, he knows where they are.
Should a woman be pregnant with a child
Whose sex has not yet been determined,
Nor is it known if it is a freak or nonhuman,
Smelling the scent, he can know.
By the power of his smelling,
He can know when she first conceived,
Whether the fetus is mature,
And if she will safely bear a blessed child.
By the power of his smelling,
He knows what men and women are thinking:
Their defiling desires, stupidity, and hateful thoughts.
He also knows those who cultivate goodness.
The gold, silver, and jewels
Hidden in the earth's storehouses,
Filling copper vessels
Smelling the scents, he knows them all.
Various kinds of beads
Whose value cannot be known
By smelling their scent, he knows their value,
Where they came from, and where they are now.
All the flowers in the heavens,
Mandarava and manjushaka,
The parijata trees*

*Smelling their scents, he can know them.
The palaces in the heavens
Superior, middling, or inferior,
Adorned with many jewels and flowers
Smelling their scents, he can know them all.
Heavenly gardens, groves, and supreme palaces;
Towers and wondrous Dharma Halls;
The amusements to be found therein
Smelling their scents, he can know them all.
The gods, whether listening to the Dharma
Or enjoying the pleasures of the five desires,
Coming or going, walking, sifting, or reclining
By the scents, he can know them completely.
The garments worn by the goddesses,
Their adornments of flowers and perfume
As they ramble around for pleasure
By their scents, he knows them all.
Proceeding thus upward,
Reaching to the Brahma heavens,
Those who enter dhyana and those who leave it
Smelling their scents, he knows them all.
The Heavens of Light-Sound and Pervasive Purity,
On up to the Peak of Existence,
Those just born there and those sliding down
Smelling their scents, he knows them all.
The host of Bhikshus,
Ever vigorous in the Dharma,
Whether sifting or walking;
Reading or reciting the Sutra;
Or in the woods beneath trees,
Concentrated, sifting in dhyana
The one who upholds the Sutra, smelling their scents,
Knows where they are.
Bodhisattvas of solid resolve,
Whether sifting in dhyana or reading and reciting,
Or speaking the Dharma to others
Smelling their scents, he knows them all.
In any place the World Honored One may be,
There revered by the multitudes,
As he pities them and speaks the Dharma
By smelling the scent, he knows this completely.
Living beings in the Buddha's presence,
Hearing the Sutra and rejoicing,
Cultivate in accord with Dharma.
By smelling the scents, he completely knows them.
Even though he hasn't yet attained the Bodhisattva's*

*Nonoutflow Dharma-nose,
Still, the upholder of this Sutra
Will first attain a nose with such characteristics.*

"Moreover, Ever-Vigorous, if a good man or a good woman receives and upholds this Sutra, whether reading, reciting, explaining it to others, or writing it out, he or she will gain twelve hundred meritorious virtues of the tongue. All things, whether good or bad tasting, savory or unsavory, bitter or astringent, when they come in contact with his tongue will change into things of superior flavor, like heavenly sweet dew. None will not be flavorful. If he lectures amidst the great assembly, his sound will be profound and wonderful, penetrating their minds and causing them all to be joyful and happy.

"Further, all the gods and goddesses, Shakra, Brahma, and all the gods, hearing these profound, wonderful sounds of his orderly exposition, will all come to listen. All the dragons, female dragons, *yakshas*, female *yakshas*, *gandharvas*, female *gandharvas*, *asuras*, female *asuras*, *garudas*, female *garudas*, *kinnaras*, female *kinnaras*, *mahoragas*, and female *mahoragas*, in order to hear the Dharma, will draw near him and reverently make offerings to him.

"The Bhikshus and Bhikshunis; Upasakas and Upasikas; kings, princes, ministers, and retainers; minor wheel-turning kings; and great wheel-turning kings with their seven treasures, thousands of sons, and their inner and outer retinues will all ride their palaces there to listen to the Dharma. Because this Bodhisattva skillfully speaks the Dharma, the Brahmans, laypeople, and citizens of the country will follow him for as long as he lives, serving and making offerings to him.

"Further, the Hearers, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Buddhas will always take delight in seeing him.

"Wherever this person is, the Buddhas are right in front of him speaking the Dharma. He is also able to receive and uphold all the Buddhadharma and to put forth the profound and wondrous Dharma-sound."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying,

*This person's tongue is pure
And will never taste foulflavors.
All of the food he eats
Turns into sweet dew.
Using the profound, pure, and wondrous sound,
He speaks the Dharma for the great assembly
Using causes, conditions, and analogies
To guide the minds of living beings,
Who, on hearing him, rejoice
And make superior offerings.*

*The gods, dragons, yakshas,
And asuras, and so forth,
All with reverent minds,
Come to hear the Dharma.
This person who speaks the Dharma,
Should he wish with a wondrous sound
To pervade three thousand worlds,
As he wishes, he will be able to do so.
Wheel-turning kings, great and minor,
Their thousands of sons and their retinues,
With palms joined and reverent minds,
Always come to hear and receive the Dharma.
The gods, dragons, yakshas,
Rakshasas and pishacas,
Also, with happy hearts,
Always delight in coming to make offerings.
The god king Brahma, King Mara,
Self-Mastery, and Great Self-Mastery,
And all the hosts of gods
Always come to where he is.
All the Buddhas and their disciples,
Hearing his sound as he speaks the Dharma,
Are ever mindful and protective,
And sometimes manifest in person.*

"Further, Ever-Vigorous, if a good man or a good woman receives and upholds this Sutra, whether reading, reciting, explaining it to others, or writing it out, he will obtain eight hundred meritorious virtues of the body. He will obtain a pure body, as pure as *vaidurya*, which living beings will be delighted to see, because of the purity of his body. Living beings in the three thousand great thousand world system, whether at the time of birth or at the time of death, above or below, fair or ugly, whether born in a good place or born in an evil place, will all manifest within it. The Iron Ring Mountain, the Great Iron Ring Mountain, Meru Mountain, Mahameru Mountain, and the other mountains, and all the living beings in their midst will appear within it. Below to the Avici hells and above to the Peak of Existence, all living beings will manifest therein. If Hearers, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas, or Buddhas speak the Dharma, they will all manifest their physical images within his body."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying:

*If a person holds the Dharma Flower,
His body will be extremely pure,
Like that of pure vaidurya,
And living beings will all take delight in seeing him.
Also, as in a pure, bright mirror*

*All images are seen,
The Bodhisattva, within his pure body,
Sees everything in the world.
He alone has clear perception,
For these things are not seen by other people.
Within three thousand worlds,
All the multitudes of living beings
Gods, humans, asuras,
Hell-beings, ghosts, and animals:
All such images as these
Appear within his body.
The palaces of the gods
Up to the Peak of Existence,
The Iron Ring and Meru
And Mahameru Mountains,
And the waters of all the great seas
All appear within his body.
The Buddhas and Hearers,
Disciples of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas,
Whether singly or in a multitude,
Speaking Dharma, all manifest.
Although he has not yet gained the nonoutflow,
Wondrous body of the Dharma-nature,
Within his pure, ordinary body,
All things manifest.*

"Further, Ever-Vigorous, if a good man or a good woman, after the passing into stillness of the Thus Come One, receives and upholds this Sutra, whether reading, reciting, explaining it to others or writing it out, he will obtain twelve hundred meritorious virtues of the mind. With his pure mind, by hearing so much as a single verse or a single sentence, he will comprehend limitless, boundless meanings. Having understood these meanings, he will then be able to expound on a single sentence or a single verse for as long as a month, four months, or -up to a year. All the Dharma he speaks will accord with the meaning and purport, and none of it will contradict the Real Mark. If he speaks on worldly texts, expounds on the principles of government, or follows an occupation to make a living, it will all accord with the proper Dharma. In the three thousand great thousand world system, all the living beings of the six destinies, their mental processes, their mental activities, the frivolous assertions in their minds, all these he completely knows. Although he has not yet gained the nonoutflow wisdom, still his mind is as pure as this. All of this person's thoughts, calculations, or pronouncements are Buddhadharma, and none are not true and real, and all have been spoken in the Sutras of former Buddhas."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying,

*This person's mind is pure,
Bright, sharp, and immaculate.
With this wonderful mind,
He knows superior, middle, and inferior Dharmas.
If he hears but a single verse,
He comprehends limitless meanings
And speaks them in good order according to Dharma,
For a month, four months, or a year.
Inside and outside, this world,
All the living beings,
Be they gods, dragons, or humans,
Yakshas, ghosts, or spirits,
All those in the six destinies,
All of their different thoughts,
The upholder of the Dharma Flower,
As a reward, knows all at once.
The countless Buddhas in the ten directions,
Adorned with the marks of a hundred blessings,
Speak the Dharma for living beings.
He hears it all and can receive and hold it.
He ponders limitless meanings
And speaks limitless Dharmas, too,
Without a mistake or omission from beginning to end,
Because he upholds the Dharma Flower.
He completely knows the marks of all Dharmas,
And recognizes their meaningful sequence.
Knowing the names and words,
He expounds on them as he understands them.
What this person says
Is all the Dharma of former Buddhas.
And because he expounds on this Dharma,
He is fearless in the assembly.
The one who upholds the Dharma Flower
Has a pure mind like this.
Although he has not yet attained to no-outflows,
He already has such marks as these.
This person, upholding the Sutra,
Dwells securely on rare ground,
And all living beings
Delight in him, cherish and revere him.
He can, with a thousand myriads of kinds
Of skillful, clever words,
Speak the Dharma in detail,
Because he upholds the Dharma Flower.*

CHAPTER TWENTY

NEVER-SLIGHTING BODHISATTVA

AT THAT TIME the Buddha told the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Great Strength, "You should now know that if someone reviles, abuses, or slanders a Bhikshu, Bhikshuni, Upasaka, or Upasika who upholds the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, he will incur great offense retribution as described above. The meritorious virtues obtained through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind gained by the upholder of the Sutra are also as described above.

"Great Strength, once limitless, boundless, inconceivable *asamkhyeyas* of eons ago, there was a Buddha by the name of King of Awesome Sound Thus Come One, One Worthy of Offerings, One of Proper and Pervasive Knowledge, One Perfect in Clarity and Conduct, WellGone One, One Who Understands the World, Unsurpassed Lord, Regulating Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, World Honored One.

"His eon was named 'Apart From Decay.' His country was named 'Great Accomplishment.'

"In that world, the Buddha King of Awesome Sound spoke the Dharma for the gods, humans, and *asuras*. To those who sought to be Hearers, he spoke the Dharma of the Four Truths to take them across birth, old age, sickness, and death to ultimate Nirvana. To those who sought to be Pratyekabuddhas, he spoke the Dharma of the Twelve Causes and Conditions. For the Bodhisattvas, in order to lead them to *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*, he spoke the Dharma of the Six Paramitas, which culminates in Buddha-wisdom.

"Great Strength, the Buddha King of Awesome Sound had a life span of eons equal in number to the grains of sand in forty myriads of *kotis* of *nayutas* of Ganges Rivers.

"His proper Dharma dwelt in the world for eons equal in number to the motes of dust in a single Jambudvipa. The Dharma Image Age dwelt in the world for eons equal in number to the motes of dust in one set of four continents. After benefiting living beings, he passed into stillness.

"After the Proper and Image Dharma had become completely extinct, in this country yet another Buddha appeared, also by the name of King of Awesome Sound Thus Come One, One Worthy of Offerings, One of Proper and Pervasive Knowledge, One Perfect in Clarity and Conduct, Well Gone One, One Who Understands the World, Unsurpassed Lord, Regulating Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, World Honored One. In this way, in sequence, there were twenty thousand *kotis* of Buddhas, all of the same name.

"When the first Thus Come One King of Awesome Sound had passed into stillness, and after the extinction of his proper Dharma, during the Dharma Image Age there were Bhikshus of overweening pride who assumed great power. At that time. there was a Bhikshu-Bodhisattva by the name of Never-Slighting.

"Great Strength, for what reason was he called Never-Slighting? Whomever this Bhikshu met, be it a Bhikshu, Bhikshuni, Upasaka, or Upasika, he would bow to them all and praise them, saying, 'I deeply respect all of you and dare not slight you. Why? You are all practicing the Bodhisattva Path and shall attain Buddhahood.'

"This Bhikshu did not read and recite Sutras, but specialized in making obeisance to the point that when he saw the four assemblies from afar, he would approach them, bow, and praise them, saying, 'I dare not slight you, for you shall all become Buddhas.'

"Within the four assemblies, there were some who grew irate, those with impure minds who reviled him with foul mouths, saying, 'Where did this senseless Bhikshu come from, who says "I dare not slight you" and then gives us predictions, saying we shall become Buddhas? We don't need such false predictions!'

"In this way for many years he was scolded and reviled. But he never got angry. He always said, 'You shall become Buddhas.' When he said that, those people would beat him with sticks or throw stones at him. He would run off, stand at a distance, and shout out, 'I dare not slight you, for you shall all become Buddhas!' Because he always said that, the Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas of overweening pride gave him the name 'Never-Slighting.'

"When this Bhikshu's life was coming to an end, in space he heard all of the complete twenty thousand myriad *kotis* of verses of the *Dharma Flower Sutra* previously spoken by the Buddha King of Awesome Sound. He was able to receive and uphold them all. He immediately obtained the purity of the eye and the purity of the ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, as mentioned above. Having obtained the purity of the six senses, his life span was further increased by two million *kotis* of *nayutas* of years. He extensively spoke the *Dharma Flower Sutra* for others.

"At that time the four assemblies of Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas of overweening pride who had ridiculed him and named him Never-Slighting saw that he had gained great powers of spiritual penetrations, the power of the eloquence of delight in speech, and the power of great wholesome silence. Hearing what he said, they faithfully submitted to him and followed him. This Bodhisattva further transformed thousands of myriads of *kotis* of multitudes, causing them to dwell in *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*. When his life was over, he was able to encounter two thousand *kotis* of Buddhas, all named Brightness of Sun-Moon-Lamp. Within their Dharmas, he spoke the *Dharma Flower Sutra*. By means of these causes and conditions, he further encountered two thousand *kotis* of Buddhas, all named Cloud-like Comfort Lamp King. Within the Dharma of those Buddhas, he received, upheld, read, recited, and spoke for others of the four assemblies this Sutra, and so obtained the purity of his ordinary eye and the purity of his ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. He spoke the Dharma in the four assemblies with a heart free of fear.

"Great Strength, the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Never-Slighting made offerings to as many Buddhas as these: revering, honoring, and praising them and planting the roots of goodness.

"He later encountered a thousand myriad *kotis* of Buddhas, and within the Dharma of all these Buddhas, he spoke this Sutra. When his merit and virtue were realized, he became a Buddha.

"Great Strength, what do you think? At that time, could the Bodhisattva Never-Slighting have been anyone else? He was none other than myself! Had I not in former lives received, upheld, read, and recited this Sutra and explained it to others, I would not have been able to gain *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* so quickly. Because in the presence of former Buddhas I received, upheld, read, and recited this Sutra and explained it to others, I quickly gained *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*.

"Great Strength, because at that time the four assemblies of Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas hatefully reviled me, for two hundred *kotis* of eons they did not encounter a Buddha or hear the Dharma or meet the Sangha. For a thousand eons they suffered great torment in the Avici Hell. Having received their punishment, they once again encountered Never-Slighting Bodhisattva, who taught and transformed them to *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*.

"Great Strength, what do you think? At that time could the four assemblies who constantly slighted this Bodhisattva have been anyone else? They were just Bhadrupala Bodhisattva and the five hundred Bodhisattvas in this assembly, Lion Moon and the five hundred Bhikshus, and Sugatachetana and the five hundred Upasakas, all of whom are irreversible from *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*.

"Great Strength, you should know that the *Dharma Flower Sutra* greatly benefits all the Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas, causing them to arrive at *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*. Therefore, after the passing into stillness of the Thus Come One all the Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas should always receive, uphold, read, and recite this Sutra, explain it to others, and write it out."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying,

*In the past there was a Buddha
By the name of King of Awesome Sound.
With limitless spiritual powers and wisdom,
He guided all living beings.
Gods, humans, dragons, and spirits
Made offerings to him.
After this Buddha's passing into stillness,
When the Dharma was about to become extinct,
There was a Bodhisattva*

*By the name of Never-Slighting.
At that time the four assemblies were attached to the Dharma.
The Bodhisattva Never-Slighting
Would approach them
And say to them,
"I will not slight you,
For you are practicing the Way
And shall become Buddhas."
Hearing that, they slighted him,
Slandered and reviled him,
And Never-Slighting Bodhisattva endured it all.
When his punishment was finished,
At the end of his life,
He got to hear this Sutra,
And his six sense faculties were purified.
By the power of spiritual penetrations,
His life span was increased,
And for the sake of others,
He vastly spoke this Sutra.
The multitudes who were attached to Dharma
All received this Bodhisattva 's
Teaching and successfully
Were led to dwell in the Buddha Way.
When Never-Slighting's life ended,
He met with countless Buddhas,
And because he spoke this Sutra,
He obtained limitless blessings.
Gradually perfecting his merit and virtue,
He quickly realized the Buddha Way.
At that time Never-Slighting
Was indeed myself!
At that time the four assemblies
Were attached to the Dharma.
Hearing Never-Slighting's words,
"You shall become Buddhas,"
By means of those causes and conditions
Were countless Buddhas encountered.
The multitude of five hundred
Bodhisattvas in this assembly
And the men and women of pure faith
Within the four assemblies
Are now in front of me,
Listening to the Dharma.
In former lives
I exhorted these people
To listen to and receive this Sutra,*

*Which is the foremost Dharma.
I instructed them
And led them to dwell in Nirvana,
And life after life, to receive and uphold
A Sutra such as this.
For only in millions and millions of myriads of eons,
Inconceivable in number,
Can one get to hear
The Dharma Flower Sutra.
And only in millions and millions of myriads of eons,
Inconceivable in number,
Do the Buddhas, World Honored Ones,
Happen to speak this Sutra.
Therefore, the practitioner
After the Buddha's passing,
On hearing this Sutra,
Should not give rise to doubts
But should, with a single mind,
Extensively proclaim this Sutra,
So that life after life he may meet the Buddhas
And quickly realize the Buddha Way.*

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE SPIRITUAL POWERS OF THE THUS COME ONE

AT THAT TIME THE Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas equal in number to the motes of dust in a thousand worlds, who had welled forth out of the earth, in the presence of the Buddha, single-mindedly, with palms joined, gazed up at the Buddha and spoke to him, saying, "World Honored One, after the Buddha's passing, in countries where there are division bodies of the Buddha, in places where he has passed into stillness, we shall extensively speak this Sutra. Why? Because we also wish to obtain this true, pure, and great Dharma; to receive, uphold, read and recite, explain, write out, and make offerings to it."

At that time, in the presence of Manjushri and the others, limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas who had long resided in the Saha world, as well as the Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, Upasikas, gods, dragons, *yakshas*, *gandharvas*, *asuras*, *garudas*, *kinnaras*, *mahoragas*, humans, non-humans, and so forth, the World Honored One manifested great spiritual powers.

He put forth his vast and long tongue which reached upward to the Brahma worlds. From all of his hair pores, he emitted lights of limitless, countless colors, all of which pervasively illuminated the worlds of the ten directions. In the same way, all the Buddhas seated on lion thrones beneath jeweled trees also put forth their vast and long tongues and emitted limitless lights.

When Shakyamuni Buddha and the Buddhas beneath the jeweled trees had manifested their spiritual powers for a full hundred thousand years, they withdrew their tongues.

Then they coughed and snapped their fingers, and those two sounds pervaded the Buddha worlds of the ten directions.

The earth quaked in six ways and the living beings in those worlds the gods, dragons, *yakshas*, *gandharvas*, *asuras*, *garudas*, *kinnaras*, *mahoragas*, humans, non-humans, and so forth by means of the Buddha's spiritual powers, all saw, in the Saha world, the limitless, boundless, hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of Buddhas seated on lion thrones beneath jeweled trees. They also saw Shakyamuni Buddha, together with the Thus Come One Many Jewels, seated on the lion throne within the jeweled stupa.

They further saw limitless, boundless, hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas, as well as the four assemblies, reverently circumambulating Shakyamuni Buddha. Having seen this, they greatly rejoiced, having gained what they had never had.

Just then the gods in space called out in a loud voice: "Passing from here through limitless, boundless, hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of *asamkhyeyas* of worlds, there is a country called Saha. Within it is a Buddha named Shakyamuni who now, for the sake of all the Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas, proclaims a Great Vehicle Sutra by the name of the *Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower*, a Dharma for teaching Bodhisattvas, of whom the Buddha is protective and mindful. You should all rejoice deep within your hearts, bow, and make offerings to Shakyamuni Buddha."

Hearing this sound in space, all the living beings placed their palms together, faced the Saha world, and said, "Namo Shakyamuni Buddha! Namo Shakyamuni Buddha!"

And then from afar, they scattered all kinds of flowers, incense, beads, banners, canopies, ornaments for the body, and precious and rare objects on the Saha world. The objects they scattered came from the ten directions like clouds gathering, and turned into jeweled canopies, completely covering the Buddhas in that region.

Then the worlds of the ten directions interpenetrated without obstruction, as if they were one Buddhaland.

At that time the Buddha told Superior Conduct and all the great assembly of Bodhisattvas, "The spiritual power of all the Buddhas is limitless, boundless, and inconceivable like this. If, using these spiritual powers, I were to speak of the meritorious virtues of this Sutra for limitless, boundless, hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of *asamkhyeyas* of eons by way of entrustment, I could not finish.

"In general, all the Dharmas of the Thus Come One, all the sovereign spiritual powers of the Thus Come One, all the secret storehouses of the Thus Come One, all the extremely profound deeds of the Thus Come One are all proclaimed and revealed in this Sutra.

"Therefore, all of you, after the passing of the Thus Come One, should with a single mind receive, uphold, read, recite, and explain it, write it out, and cultivate it as spoken. Those who receive, uphold, read, recite, explain, write out, and cultivate it as spoken, in whatever land they may be, in a place where the Sutra is kept: whether in a garden, in a forest, or beneath a tree; in a Sangha dwelling; in the dwelling of the white-robed; in a palace or hall; or in the mountains, valleys, or wilderness in all of these places they should build a *stupa* and make offerings.

"For what reason? You should know that this place is a Way-place wherein all Buddhas gain *anuttarasam yaksambodhi*, wherein all Buddhas turn the Dharma-wheel, and wherein all Buddhas enter Nirvana."

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying,

*The Buddhas, ones who save the world,
Dwelling in great spiritual penetrations,
In order to delight living beings,
Manifest limitless spiritual powers.
Their tongues reach to the Brahma Heavens,
Their bodies emit countless lights.
They make appear these rare events
For the sake of those who seek the Buddha Way.
The sounds made when the Buddhas cough
And the sounds made when they snap their fingers
Are heard throughout the lands of the ten directions
As the earth quakes in six ways.
Since after the Buddha's passing
One can uphold this Sutra,
All Buddhas rejoice
And display limitless spiritual powers.
In order to bequeath this Sub-a,
He praises those who receive and hold it.
Doing so throughout limitless eons,
Still he cannot finish.
The merit and virtue of these people
Is boundless and infinite,
Like space in the ten directions,
Without any boundary.
Those who can uphold this Sutra
Have already seen me
And also seen the Buddha Many Jewels
And all of the division bodies.
They also see me on this day
Teaching and transforming the Bodhisattvas.
Those who can uphold this Sub-a*

*Cause me and my division bodies
And the previous Buddha, Many Jewels,
To all rejoice.
They shall also see and make offerings
To the Buddhas of the ten directions in the present,
The past, and the future
Causing them to rejoice as well.
The secret and essential Dharma obtained
By the Buddhas seated in their Way-places
Will also be gained before too long
By those who can uphold this Sutra.
Those who can uphold this Sutra
Will take delight in speaking, without end,
The meaning of the Dharmas,
Their names and expressions,
Like the wind blowing through space,
Without obstacle.
After the Thus Come One's passing,
They will understand the Sutras spoken by the Buddha,
The causes and conditions in sequence,
And speak them truly, according with their meanings.
Like the light of the sun and moon
Dispelling all darkness,
These people walk through the world
Dispersing the darkness of living beings,
Teaching limitless Bodhisattvas
Ultimately to dwell in the One Vehicle.
Therefore, those with wisdom,
Hearing the advantages of this merit and virtue,
Should, after my passing,
Receive and uphold this Sutra.
These people most certainly and without a doubt
Will attain the Buddha Way.*

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE ENTRUSTMENT

AT THAT TIME Shakyamuni Buddha rose from his Dharma seat and manifested great spiritual power. With his right hand he patted the crowns of limitless Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas and said, "Throughout limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of *asamkhyeyas* of eons, I have cultivated and practiced the rare Dharmas of *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* I now entrust them to all of you. You should, with a single mind, propagate this Dharma, causing it to spread and grow extensively."

In this way he patted the Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas on the crown three times, saying, "Throughout limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of *asamkhyeyas* of eons,

I have cultivated and practiced the rare Dharmas of *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* I now entrust them to all of you. You should receive, uphold, read, recite, and vastly proclaim this Dharma, causing all living beings to hear and understand it.

"For what reason? The Thus Come One is greatly kind and compassionate, without stinginess and without fear. He is able to give living beings the wisdom of the Buddha, the wisdom of the Thus Come One, and spontaneous wisdom. The Thus Come One is a great giving host to all living beings. You should all accordingly study the Dharmas of the Thus Come One and never be stingy.

"In the future, if there is a good man or a good woman who believes in the Thus Come One's wisdom, you should expound the Dharma Flower Sutra to that person, causing the person to hear and understand and obtain the Buddha's wisdom. If there are living beings who do not believe or accept it, you should instruct them with another of the profound Dharmas of the Thus Come One, benefiting them and causing them to rejoice. If you can do this, you will have already repaid the kindness of the Buddhas."

When the Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas heard the Buddha's words, profuse joy permeated their bodies. With increasing reverence, they bowed their heads, placed their palms together, faced the Buddha, and said in unison, "We shall reverently carry out the World Honored One's command. Yes, World Honored One, pray do not be concerned about this." The assembly of Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas spoke in this way three times, saying, "We shall reverently carry out the Buddha's command. Yes, World Honored One, pray do not be concerned about this."

At that time Shakyamuni Buddha sent the division-body Buddhas of the ten directions back to their own lands, saying, "Peace to all of you Buddhas. Let the *stupa* of the Buddha Many Jewels be again as it was."

As he said this, the limitless division-body Buddhas of the ten directions, seated on lion thrones beneath jeweled trees; the Buddha Many Jewels; Superior Conduct and the limitless *asamkhyeyas* of Bodhisattvas in the great assembly; Shariputra and the other Hearers; as well as the fourfold assembly and all those in the world the gods, humans, asuras, and so forth hearing the Buddha's words, all rejoiced exceedingly.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE FORMER DEEDS OF MEDICINE KING BODHISATTVA

AT THAT TIME THE Bodhisattva Constellation King Flower spoke to the Buddha, saying, "World Honored One, how is it that the Bodhisattva Medicine King roams throughout the Saha world? World Honored One, Medicine King Bodhisattva has undertaken so many hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of *nayutas* of bitter practices, so difficult to practice.

"It would be excellent, World Honored One, if you would please explain a bit. On hearing this, all the gods, dragons, *yakshas*, *gandharvas*, *asuras*, *garudas*, *kinnaras*,

mahoragas, humans, nonhumans, and so forth, and the Bodhisattvas who have come from other lands, as well as the assembly of Hearers, will rejoice. "

The Buddha then told the Bodhisattva Constellation King Flower, "Once, as many eons ago as there are grains of sand in limitless Ganges Rivers, there was a Buddha by the name of Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, Thus Come One, One Worthy of Offerings, One of Right and Universal Knowledge, One Perfect in Clarity and Conduct, Well Gone One Who Understands the World, Unsurpassed Lord, Regulating Hero, Teacher of Humans and Gods, Buddha, World Honored One. That Buddha had eighty *kotis* of great Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas and a great assembly of Hearers, equal in number to the sand grains in seventy-two Ganges Rivers. His life span as a Buddha was forty-two thousand eons. The life spans of the Bodhisattvas were the same. In his country there were no women, hell-beings, hungry ghosts, animals, or *asuras*, and so forth, and also no difficulties. The ground was as level as the palm of one's hand, made of *vaidurya*, adorned with jeweled trees, covered with jeweled nets, and hung with beautiful banners. It was surrounded everywhere with precious vases and censers. There were terraces made of the seven gems, one terrace for each tree, the trees being separated from the terraces by a distance of an arrow's flight. Beneath each tree sat Bodhisattvas and Hearers. Upon each of the terraces were hundreds of *kotis* of gods playing heavenly music and singing praises to the Buddha as an offering."

At that time that Buddha, for the sake of the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing, as well as for the host of Bodhisattvas and the host of Hearers, spoke the *Dharma Flower Sutra*.

The Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing enjoyed practicing ascetic practices. Within the Dharma of the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, he applied himself with vigor, single-mindedly seeking Buddhahood for a full twelve thousand years. He then obtained the samadhi of the manifestation of all physical forms.

Having obtained this samadhi, his heart rejoiced greatly and he immediately thought, "I have obtained the samadhi of the manifestation of all physical forms. This is through the power of having heard the *Dharma Flower Sutra*. I should now make an offering to the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, and to the *Dharma Flower Sutra*."

He then entered that samadhi, and as an offering to the Buddha, he rained down *mandarava* flowers and *mahamandarava* flowers from space. Finely ground, hard, black *chandana* also filled the sky and descended like clouds. And there rained the incense of 'this shore' *chandana*, six *karshas* of which are worth the entire Saha world, as an offering to the Buddha.

Having made this offering he arose from samadhi. He thought to himself, "Although by means of spiritual powers I have made this offering to the Buddha, it is not as good as offering my body." He then swallowed incense of many *kinds chandana*, *kunduruka*, *turushka*, *prikka*, aloeswood, and resin incense. He also drank the oil of *champaka* and

other flowers for a full twelve hundred years. He smeared himself with fragrant oil, and in the presence of the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, he wrapped himself in heavenly jeweled robes and poured fragrant oil over himself. Then by means of spiritual penetration power and vows, he burned his own body. The light shone everywhere throughout worlds in number to the grains of sand in eighty *kotis* of Ganges Rivers.

Within them all, the Buddhas simultaneously praised him, saying, "Good indeed! Good indeed! Good man, this is true vigor. This is called a true Dharma offering to the Thus Come One. Offerings of flowers, incense, beads, burning incense, ground incense, paste incense, heavenly cloth, banners, canopies, 'this shore' *chandana* incense, and all such offerings of various kinds cannot come up to it. If one gave away one's countries, cities, wives, and children, that also could not match it. Good man, this is called foremost giving. Among all gifts, it is the most honored and most supreme, because it is an offering of Dharma to the Thus Come Ones." Having uttered these words, they became silent.

His body burned for twelve hundred years, after which time it was consumed.

When the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing had made this Dharma offering and his life had come to an end, he was born again. In the country of the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, in the household of the King Pure Virtue, he was born suddenly by transformation, seated in full lotus.

He immediately spoke this verse to his father:

*Your Majesty, you should now know:
I, cultivating in that place,
All at once attained
The samadhi of the manifestation of all forms.
Diligently practicing great vigor,
I renounced the body I cherished
As an offering to the World Honored One,
In order to seek supreme wisdom.*

Having spoken this verse, he said to his father, "The Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon is still present from of old. Formerly, after making an offering to that Buddha, I gained the *dharani* of understanding the speech of all living beings. I further heard the *Dharma Flower Sutra* with its eight hundred thousand myriads of *kotis* of *nayutas* of *kankaras*, *vivaras*, *akshobhyas*, and so forth of verses. Great King, I should now return and make offerings to this Buddha."

Just then he sat on a platform made of the seven treasures, rose up into space to the height of seven *tala* trees, went into the Buddha's presence, bowed with his head at the Buddha's feet, placed his ten fingers together, and spoke this verse in praise of the Buddha:

*How amazing and rare the countenance,
With its light shining in ten directions!
I formerly made offerings
To you whom I now behold once again.*

When the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing had spoken this verse, he then spoke to the Buddha, saying, "World Honored One! World Honored One! You are still in the world!"

The Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon told the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing, "Good man, the time of my Parinirvana has arrived. The time for my passing into stillness has arrived. You can arrange my couch, for tonight I shall enter Parinirvana."

He further commanded the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing, saying, "Good man, I entrust you, all the Bodhisattvas and great disciples, with the Buddhadharma and also with the Dharma of *anuttarasam yaksambodhi*. I also entrust to you the worlds of the seven treasures throughout the three thousand great thousand world systems, with their jeweled trees, jeweled terraces, and gods-in-waiting. After my passing into stillness, I also entrust you with all my *sharira*. You should distribute them and vastly make offerings to them. You should build several thousand *stupas*."

In this way, the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, having commanded the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing, in the last watch of the night entered Nirvana.

Seeing the Buddha pass into stillness, the Bodhisattva was sorely grieved and longed for the Buddha. He then built a pyre of 'this shore' *chandana* incense as an offering to that Buddha's body and set it on fire. When the fire had consumed itself, he collected the *sharira*; made eighty-four thousand jeweled urns; and built eighty-four thousand *stupas*, three worlds in height, adorned with poles from which hung banners, canopies, and many jeweled bells.

The Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing then further thought to himself, "Although I have made this offering, my heart is not yet satisfied. I should now make further offerings to the *sharira*." He then spoke to the dragons, the *yakshas*, and so forth in the great assembly, saying, "All of you pay attention and bring your thoughts to one, for I am now going to make offerings to the *sharira* of the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon." Having said that, in front of the eighty-four thousand *stupas*, as an offering he burned his arms, with their adornments of a hundred blessings, for seventy-two thousand years, thereby causing countless multitudes of hosts seeking to be Hearers and limitless *asamkhyeyas* of people to bring forth the resolve for *anuttarasam yaksambodhi*, and enabling them to dwell in the samadhi of the manifestation of all physical forms.

At that time all the Bodhisattvas, gods, humans, *asuras*, and so forth, seeing him without arms, were smitten with grief and said, "The Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing is our teacher. He has taught and transformed us, but now his arms are burned off and his body deformed."

Then the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing made this vow amidst the great assembly, saying, "Having renounced both of my arms, I should certainly attain the Buddha's golden-colored body. If this is true and not false, both of my arms should now be restored to as they were before."

After he had made this vow, his arms were spontaneously restored. This came about through the purity and depth of this Bodhisattva's blessings, virtue, and wisdom.

The three thousand great thousand world system then quaked in six ways. The heavens rained down jeweled flowers, and all the humans and gods gained what they had never had before.

The Buddha told the Bodhisattva Constellation King Flower, "What do you think? Was the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing anyone else? He was just the present Medicine King Bodhisattva. Gifts of his body, such as this one, number in the limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of *nayutas*.

"Constellation King Flower! If a person who brings forth the resolve desiring to obtain *anuttarasam yaksambodhi* can burn off a finger or a toe as an offering to a Buddha *stupa*, his offering will surpass that of one who uses as offerings countries, cities, wives, and children or even the three thousand great thousand worlds with their mountains, forests, rivers, ponds, and precious objects.

"If, further, a person filled the three thousand great thousand world system with the seven treasures and offered it to the Buddha, to the great Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Arhats, the merit and virtue that person would obtain would not be equal to that of one who receives and upholds even a single four-line verse of the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, for the latter's blessings are greater by far.

"Constellation King Flower! Just as, for example, among all the streams, rivers, and bodies of water, the ocean is foremost, so, too, among all the Sutras spoken by the Thus Come One, the *Dharma Flower Sutra* is the deepest and greatest.

"Further, just as among Earth Mountain, Black Mountain, the Lesser Iron Ring Mountain, the Greater Iron Ring Mountain, the Ten Jeweled Mountains, and the entire multitude of mountains, Mount Sumeru is foremost, so, too, among all the Sutras, the *Dharma Flower Sutra* is the most supreme.

"Further, just as among the stars, the Moon God is foremost, so, too, among the thousands of myriads of *kotis* of kinds of Sutra Dharmas, the *Dharma Flower Sutra* shines the brightest.

"Further, just as the Sun God can disperse all darkness, so, too, this Sutra can disperse all the darkness of unwholesomeness.

"Further, just as among the minor kings, the Wheel-Turning Sage King is foremost, so, too, among the Sutras, this Sutra is the most honored.

"Further, just as in the Heaven of the Thirty-three, Lord Shakra is king, so, too, among the Sutras, this Sutra is king.

"Further, just as the great Brahma God is the father of all living beings, so, too, is this Sutra the father of all the worthy sages, those studying, those beyond study, as well as those who have brought forth the Bodhisattva mind.

"Further, just as among the common people, the Srotaapanna, Sakridagamin, Anagamin, Arhat, and Pratyekabuddha are foremost, so, too, among all Sutra Dharmas, whether spoken by the Thus Come Ones, by the Bodhisattvas, or by Hearers, this Sutra is foremost.

"One who can receive and uphold this Sutra, in the same way, is foremost among all living beings.

"Just as among all the Hearers and Pratyekabuddhas, the Bodhisattva is foremost, so, too, among all the Sutra Dharmas, this Sutra is foremost.

"Just as the Buddha is the king of all Dharmas, so, too, is this Sutra the king of all Sutras.

"Constellation King Flower! This Sutra can save all living beings. This Sutra can lead all living beings to separate from suffering and distress. This Sutra can greatly benefit all living beings, fulfilling their vows. Just as a clear, refreshing pool can quench the thirst of all; as a cold person finds fire; as a naked person finds clothing; as a merchant finds customers; as a child finds its mother; as a passenger finds a boat; as a sick person finds a doctor; as one in a dark place finds a lamp; as a poor person finds a jewel; as the people find a king; as a trader finds the sea; as a torch dispels darkness the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, in the same way, can cause living beings to leave all suffering and all sickness and pain; it can untie all the bonds of birth and death.

"If a person hears the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, writes it out himself, or employs others to write it out, the limits of the merit and virtue he shall obtain cannot be calculated even by means of the Buddha's wisdom.

"If a person writes out this Sutra and makes offerings to it of flowers; incense; beads; burning incense; powdered incense; paste incense; banners and canopies; clothing; and lamps of various kinds such as butter lamps, oil lamps and fragrant oil lamps, lamps of *champak* oil, lamps of *sumana* oil, lamps of *patala* oil, lamps of *varshika* oil, and lamps of *navamalika* oil, the merit and virtue obtained is also limitless.

"At that time all the Buddhas will praise this person from afar saying, 'Good indeed, good indeed, good man, that within the Dharma of Shakyamuni Buddha you can receive, uphold, read, recite, and ponder this Sutra, and speak it for others. The merit and virtue you obtain is limitless and boundless. Fire cannot burn it. Water cannot flood it. Your merit and virtue is such that if a thousand Buddhas spoke of it together, they could not exhaust it.

"'You have already been able to destroy the thieves of Mara, to ruin the troops of birth and death, and to demolish all remaining enemies.

"'Good man, a hundred thousand Buddhas, with their power of spiritual penetrations, all protect you. In all the world with its gods and humans, there is none like you, with the exception of the Thus Come One. The Hearers and Pratyekabuddhas, and even the Bodhisattvas, cannot equal you in wisdom and Dhyana concentration.'

"Constellation King Flower, such is the power of the merit and virtue and wisdom accomplished by this Bodhisattva.

"If a person hears this chapter, "The Past Deeds of Medicine King Bodhisattva," and rejoices in accord, praising its goodness, that person's mouth in his present life will always emit the fragrance of a blue lotus. The pores of his body will always emit the perfume of oxhead *chandana*. The merit and virtue he obtains will be as described above.

"Therefore, Constellation King Flower, I entrust to you this chapter, "The Past Deeds of Medicine King Bodhisattva." After my passing, in the last five hundred years, propagate it extensively in Jambudvīpa. Do not let it become extinct, thereby allowing evil demons, demonic denizens, all the heavenly dragons, *yakshas*, *kumbhandas*, and so forth to get their way.

"Constellation King Flower, you should use the power of spiritual penetrations to protect this Sutra. Why? Because this Sutra is good medicine for the sicknesses of those in Jambudvīpa. If a sick person gets to hear this Sutra, his sickness will be cured immediately. He will not grow old or die.

"Constellation King Flower, if you see a person who receives and upholds this Sutra, you should scatter blue lotuses filled with powdered incense over him as an offering. Having done that, you should reflect: 'Before long, this person will certainly lay out a grass mat, sit in the Way-place, vanquish the troops of Mara, blow the Dharma conch, strike the great Dharma drum, and save all living beings from the sea of old age, sickness, and death. therefore, when those who seek the Buddha Way see one who receives and upholds this Sutra, they should bring forth a reverent heart in this way."

When this chapter, "The Past Deeds of Medicine King Bodhisattva," was spoken, eighty-four thousand Bodhisattvas obtained the *dharani* of understanding the speech of all living beings.

From within the jeweled *stupa*, the Thus Come One Many Jewels praised Constellation King Flower Bodhiattva, saying, "Good indeed, good indeed, Constellation King Flower! You have accomplished such inconceivable merit and virtue that you are able to question Shakyamuni Buddha about matters such as these and to benefit limitless living beings.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR **THE BODHISATTVA WONDROUS SOUND**

AT THAT TIME Shakyamuni Buddha emitted a light from his flesh cowl, the mark of a great person, and a radiance issued forth from the white hair-mark between his eyebrows, everywhere illumining Buddha worlds to the east equal in number to the grains of sand in one hundred and eight myriads of *kotis* of *nayutas* of Ganges Rivers.

Beyond these, there was a world by the name of Adorned with Pure Light. In that world was a Buddha by the name of Wisdom of Pure Flower Constellation King Thus Come One, One Worthy of Offerings, One of Right and Universal Knowledge, One Whose Clarity and Conduct Are Complete, Well Gone One Who Understands the World, Supreme Lord, Regulating Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, World Honored One. He was reverently surrounded by a great multitude of limitless, boundless Bodhisattvas to whom he was speaking the Dharma.

The light that issued forth from Shakyamuni Buddha's white hair-mark universally illumined that country.

At that time in the country Adorned with All Pure Light, there was a Bodhisattva by the name of Wondrous Sound, who had, for a long time, planted the roots of virtue by making offerings and drawing near to limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of Buddhas and had completely accomplished profound wisdom.

He had obtained the Samadhi of the Wonderful Banner Mark,

the Samadhi of the Dharma Flower,
the Samadhi of Pure Virtue,
the Samadhi of the Playfulness of Constellation King,
the Samadhi of No Affinity,
the Samadhi of the Seal of Wisdom,
the Samadhi of Understanding the Speech of all Living Beings,
the Samadhi of the Accumulation of All Merit and Virtue,
the Samadhi of Purity,
the Samadhi of Playful Roaming of Spiritual Penetrations,
the Samadhi of the Wisdom Torch,
the Samadhi of Royal Splendor,
the Samadhi of Pure Light,
the Samadhi of the Pure Treasury,
the Samadhi of Difference, and
the Samadhi of Sun-Revolution.

He obtained such great samadhis as these, equal in number to the grains of sand in a hundred thousand myriad *kotis* of Ganges Rivers.

When Shakyamuni Buddha's light illumined his body, he immediately spoke to the Buddha Wisdom of Pure Flower Constellation King, saying, "World Honored One, I should go to the Saha world to bow to, draw near to, and make offerings to Shakyamuni Buddha, and to see the Dharma Prince Bodhisattva Manjushri, the Bodhisattva Medicine King, the Bodhisattva Courageous Giving, the Bodhisattva Constellation King Flower, the Bodhisattva Mind of Superior Practice, the Bodhisattva King of Adornment, and the Bodhisattva Medicine Superior."

At that time the Buddha Wisdom of Pure Flower Constellation King told the Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound, "You should not look lightly upon that country or think of it as inferior. Good man, the Saha world is uneven, its earth, stones, and mountains are filled with filth and evil. The Buddha's body is lowly and small. The Bodhisattvas are also small in shape. Your body is forty-two thousand *yojanas* in height. My body is six hundred and eighty myriad *yojanas* in height. Your body is superb and upright, with a hundred thousand myriad blessings and fine and subtle light. Therefore, if you go, do not look lightly upon that country, its Buddha, Bodhisattvas, or lands."

The Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, I shall now go to the Saha world, and this is all through the power of the Thus Come One; the playful roaming spiritual penetrations of the Thus Come One; and the adornments of merit, virtue, and wisdom of the Thus Come One."

Then the Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound, without rising from his seat, his body motionless, entered samadhi. With the power of samadhi he went to Mount Gridhrakuta, not far from the Dharma seat. He then created by transformation eighty-four thousand jeweled lotuses, their stems of Jambunada gold, their leaves of silver, their pistils of *vajra*, and their sepals of *kumshuka* jewels.

The Dharma Prince Manjushri, seeing the lotuses, asked the Buddha, "World Honored One, what is the reason for this portent, these several thousands of myriads of lotuses, their stems of Jambunada gold, their leaves of silver, their pistils of *vajra* and their sepals of *kumshuka*?"

At that time Shakyamuni Buddha told Manjushri, "The Bodhisattva Mahasattva Wondrous Sound, surrounded by eighty-four thousand Bodhisattvas, wishes to come from the country of the Buddha Wisdom of Pure Light Constellation King to this Saha world to make offerings, draw near to, and bow to me. He also wishes to make offerings and listen to the *Dharma Flower Sutra*."

Manjushri said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, what good roots has this Bodhisattva planted, what merit and virtue has he cultivated that he can have this great power of spiritual penetrations? What samadhi has he practiced? I pray that you will tell us the name of this samadhi. We, too wish to cultivate it diligently, for by practicing this

samadhi we will be able to see this Bodhisattva, his appearance, size, and awesome manner, and his comings and goings. We only pray that the World Honored One will, by means of the power of spiritual penetrations, let us see that Bodhisattva when he comes."

At that time Shakyamuni Buddha told Manjushri, "The Thus Come One Many Jewels who passed into stillness long ago shall, for your sakes, manifest these signs."

The Buddha Many Jewels then said to the Bodhisattva, "Good man, come here! The Dharma Prince Manjushri wishes to see you in person."

The Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound then disappeared from his own country, and together with eighty-four thousand Bodhisattvas, set out on his way. The countries they passed through quaked in six ways, and all rained down lotuses made of the seven treasures, while a hundred thousand kinds of heavenly music played spontaneously.

The Bodhisattva's eyes were like the broad, large petals of a blue lotus. A hundred thousand myriad moons combined would not surpass the awesome beauty of his facial features. His body was the color of gold, adorned with limitless hundreds of thousands of meritorious virtues. The light of his awesome virtue blazed with brilliant splendor, and his marks were all perfect. His body was as solid as that of Narayana. He entered a terrace made of the seven treasures, and rose up into space to the height of seven *tala* trees. With Bodhisattvas reverently surrounding him, he came to Mount Gridhrakuta in the Saha world.

Having arrived, he stepped down from the terrace of seven treasures. Taking a necklace of beads, its value in the hundreds of thousands, he went before Shakyamuni Buddha, bowed with his head at the Buddha's feet, offered up the necklace and said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the Buddha Wisdom of Pure Flower Constellation King inquires after the World Honored One. Are you free from sickness and worry? Are you energetic in your comings and goings? Is your practice peaceful and happy? Are the four elements in harmony? Are you enduring the affairs of the world? Are living beings easy to save, without much greed, hatred, stupidity, jealousy, stinginess, or arrogance? None are not filial in their behavior toward their parents, are they, or disrespectful toward Shramanas, deviant in their views, unwholesome in their thoughts, or not in control of the five emotions? World Honored One, have living beings been able to conquer the hateful demons? Has the long since passed Thus Come One Many Jewels, within the jeweled *stupa*, come to hear the Dharma?

"He also wishes to inquire as to whether the Thus Come One Many Jewels is peaceful and secure, free from worry, and long abiding in the world 'Worthy of Being Endured.'"

"World Honored One, we now wish to see the Buddha Many Jewels. We only pray that the World Honored One will allow us to see him."

Shakyamuni Buddha told the Buddha Many Jewels, "The Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound wishes to see you."

The Buddha Many Jewels spoke to Wondrous Sound, saying, "Good indeed! Good indeed, that in order to make offerings to Shakyamuni Buddha and to hear the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, as well as to see Manjushri and the others, you have come here."

The Bodhisattva Flower Virtue then spoke to the Buddha, saying, "World Honored One, what good roots has the Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound planted, and what meritorious virtues has he cultivated that he has these spiritual powers?"

The Buddha told the Bodhisattva Flower Virtue, "In the past there was a Buddha by the name of Clouds and Thunder Sound King, Thus Come One, Arhat, Samyaksambuddha. His country was called Manifesting All Worlds. His eon was named Delightful to See. For twelve thousand years, the Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound made offerings to the Buddha Clouds and Thunder Sound King of a hundred thousand kinds of music. He also offered up eighty-four thousand bowls made of the seven treasures. As a result of these deeds, he has been born in the country of the Buddha Wisdom of Pure Flower Constellation King and now possesses these spiritual powers.

"Flower Virtue, what do you think? Could the Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound who made offerings of music and jeweled vessels to the Buddha Clouds and Thunder Sound King have been anyone else? He was just this Bodhisattva Mahasattva Wondrous Sound.

"Flower Virtue! The Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound has in the past made offerings and drawn near to limitless Buddhas, for a long time planting the roots of virtue and encountering hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of *nayutas* of Buddhas equal in number to the sands of the Ganges.

"Flower Virtue, you see merely the body of the Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound as it appears here. However, this Bodhisattva manifests all kinds of bodies and speaks this Sutra in many places for living beings.

"He may manifest in the body of a Brahma King; he may manifest in the body of Shakra; he may manifest in the body of the God of Sovereignty; he may manifest in the body of the God of Great Sovereignty; he may manifest in the body of a great heavenly general; he may manifest in the body of the heavenly king Vaishravana; he may manifest in the body of a wheel-turning sage king; he may manifest in the body of a minor king; he may manifest in the body of an elder; he may manifest in the body of a layperson; he may manifest in the body of a minister of state; he may manifest in the body of a Brahman; he may manifest in the body of a Bhikshu, Bhikshuni, Upasaka, or Upasika; he may manifest in the body of an elder's wife or a layman's wife; he may manifest in the body of a minister's wife; he may manifest in the body of a Brahman's wife; he may manifest in the body of a young boy or a young girl. He may manifest in the body of a god, dragon, *yaksha*, *gandharva*, *asura*, *garuda*, *kinnara*, *mahoraga*, a human, or a nonhuman and speak this Sutra.

"He can rescue all in the hells, the hungry ghosts, and the animals, as well as those in difficulty. He can even transform himself into a woman of the king's inner court and speak this Sutra.

"Flower Virtue, the Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound can rescue all living beings in the Saha world. The Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound can, in this way, transform into all these different kinds of bodies and speak this Sutra for living beings in the Saha world and still lose nothing of his spiritual penetrations, transformations, and wisdom.

"This Bodhisattva's wisdom shines brightly upon the Saha world, causing living beings to each gain understanding. In worlds like Ganges' sands throughout the ten directions, he does the same.

"To those who must be crossed over by the form of a Hearer, he manifests in the form of a Hearer and speaks the Dharma for them.

"To those who must be crossed over by the form of a Pratyekabuddha, he manifests in the form of a Pratyekabuddha and speaks the Dharma for them.

"To those who must be crossed over by the form of a Bodhisattva, he manifests in the form of a Bodhisattva and speaks the Dharma for them.

"To those who must be crossed over by the form of a Buddha, he manifests in the form of a Buddha and speaks the Dharma for them. In this way he manifests in all manner of forms to cross them over in the appropriate manner, even to the point of manifesting entering stillness to those who must be crossed over by manifesting entering stillness.

"Flower Virtue, such is the great power of the spiritual penetrations and wisdom of the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Wondrous Sound."

At that time the Bodhisattva Flower Virtue said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound has deeply planted the roots of goodness. World Honored One, in what samadhi does this Bodhisattva dwell that he is able in this way to transform himself and save living beings?"

The Buddha told the Bodhisattva flower Virtue, "Good man, this samadhi is called the Manifestation of All Physical Forms. The Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound, dwelling in this samadhi, can in this way benefit limitless living beings"

When this chapter on the Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound had been spoken, those who had accompanied the Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound, eighty-four thousand in all, all obtained the Samadhi of the Manifestation of all Physical Forms. Limitless Bodhisattvas in the Saha world also gained this samadhi, as well as *dharani*.

At that time the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Wondrous Sound, having made offerings to Shakyamuni Buddha and to the *stupa* of the Buddha Many Jewels, returned to his own

country. The countries he passed through quaked in six ways, precious lotus flowers rained down, and hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of kinds of music played. When he arrived at his own country, surrounded by the eighty-four thousand Bodhisattvas, he went before the Buddha Wisdom of Pure Flower Constellation King and said, "World Honored One, I have been to the Saha world where I benefited living beings. I saw Shakyamuni Buddha and the *stupa* of Many Jewels Buddha, bowed, and made offerings to them. I also saw the Bodhisattva Manjushri, the Dharma Prince, as well as the Bodhisattva Medicine King, the Bodhisattva Who Has Gained the Power of Diligent Vigor, the Bodhisattva Courageous Giving, and others, and enabled eighty-four thousand Bodhisattvas to obtain the Samadhi of the Manifestation of All Physical Forms."

When this chapter on the comings and goings of the Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound had been spoken, forty-two thousand gods obtained the patience with the Nonproduction of Dharmas. The Bodhisattva Flower Virtue obtained the Dharma Flower Samadhi.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE UNIVERSAL DOOR OF GUANSHI YIN BODHISATTVA **(THE BODHISATTVA WHO CONTEMPLATES THE SOUNDS OF THE WORLD)**

AT THAT TIME Inexhaustible Intention Bodhisattva rose from his seat, uncovered his right shoulder, placed his palms together, and facing the Buddha, said, "World Honored One, for what reason is the Bodhisattva Guanshiyin called 'Guanshiyin'?"

The Buddha told Inexhaustible Intention Bodhisattva, "Good man, if any of the limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of living beings who are undergoing all kinds of suffering hear of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva and recite his name single-mindedly, Guanshiyin Bodhisattva will immediately hear their voices and rescue them.

"If a person who upholds the name of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva enters a great fire, the fire will not burn him, all because of this Bodhisattva's awesome spiritual power.

"If a person being tossed about in the great sea calls out the Bodhisattva's name, he will find a shallow place.

"If the hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of beings who seek gold, silver, lapis lazuli, mother-of-pearl, carnelian, coral, amber, pearls, and so forth enter the great sea, an evil wind may toss their boats into the territory of the *rakshasa* ghosts. But if among them there is even one person who calls out the name of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, they will all be saved from the difficulty of the *rakshasas*. For this reason, he is called Guanshiyin.

"Further, if a person who is about to be harmed calls out the name of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, the knives and staves of the attackers will break into pieces and he will be saved.

"If *yakshas* and *rakshasas* enough to fill the three thousand great thousand world system come to torment a person, if they hear him call out the name of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, all those evil ghosts will not even be able to stare at that person with their evil eyes, how much the less harm him.

"If a person, whether guilty or not, who has been put in stocks or bound with chains calls out the name of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, his fetters will break apart and he will immediately be freed.

"If bandits enough to fill the three thousand great thousand world system infest a dangerous road on which a merchant chief in charge of costly jewels is leading a group of merchants, but among the merchants there is even a single person who says, 'Good men, do not be afraid! You should all single-mindedly recite the name of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva. This Bodhisattva bestows fearlessness upon living beings. If you recite his name, you shall surely be saved from these robbers,' and if upon hearing that, the merchants all cry out together, '*Namo* Guanshiyin Bodhisattva,' then they will immediately be saved because they recited his name.

"Inexhaustible Intention! The awesome spiritual power of the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Guanshiyin is as lofty and sublime as that!

"If living beings who have much sexual desire constantly and reverently recite the name of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, they will be separated from desire.

"If those who have much hatred constantly and reverently recite the name of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, they will be separated from hatred.

"If those who are very stupid constantly and reverently recite the name of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, they will be separated from stupidity.

"Inexhaustible Intention, Guanshiyin Bodhisattva has great awesome spiritual powers such as these and confers great benefits. Therefore living beings should always be mindful of him.

"If women who seek sons bow and make offerings to Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, they will give birth to blessed, virtuous, and wise sons. If they seek daughters, they will give birth to upright and handsome daughters who have planted roots of virtue in previous lives and who are regarded and respected by all.

"Inexhaustible Intention! Guanshiyin Bodhisattva has powers such as these. If there are living beings who reverently bow to Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, they will be blessed and their efforts will not be in vain.

"Therefore living beings should all receive and uphold the name of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva.

"Inexhaustible Intention! If a person were to receive and uphold the names of Bodhisattvas in number as the grains of sand in sixty-two *kotis* of Ganges Rivers, and in addition were to exhaustively make offerings to them of food, drink, clothing, bedding, and medicine, what do you think—would that good man's or good woman's merit and virtue be great or not?"

Inexhaustible Intention Bodhisattva replied, "Very great, World Honored One."

The Buddha said, "If another person were to receive and uphold the name of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva and bow and make offerings but once, that person's blessings would be equal to and not different from the other person's. They could not be exhausted in hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of eons.

"Inexhaustible Intention, one who receives and upholds the name of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva obtains the benefit of blessings and virtues as limitless and boundless as those."

Inexhaustible Intention Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, how does Guanshiyin Bodhisattva roam through this Saha world? How does he speak the Dharma for living beings? How does he carry out this work with the power of expedients?"

The Buddha told Inexhaustible Intention Bodhisattva, "Good man, if living beings in this land must be saved by means of someone in the body of a Buddha, Guanshiyin Bodhisattva will manifest in the body of a Buddha and speak Dharma for them.

"If they must be saved by someone in the body of a Pratyekabuddha, he will manifest in the body of a Pratyekabuddha and speak Dharma for them.

"If they must be saved by someone in the body of a Hearer, he will manifest in the body of a Hearer and speak Dharma for them.

"If they must be saved by someone in the body of the Brahma King, he will manifest in the body of the Brahma King and speak Dharma for them.

"If they must be saved by someone in the body of Shakra, he will manifest in the body of Shakra and speak Dharma for them.

"If they must be saved by someone in the body of the God of Sovereignty, he will manifest in the body of the God of Sovereignty and speak Dharma for them.

"If they must be saved by someone in the body of the Great God of Sovereignty, he will manifest in the body of the Great God of Sovereignty and speak Dharma for them.

"If they must be saved by someone in the body of a great heavenly general, he will manifest in the body of a great heavenly general and speak Dharma for them.

"If they must be saved by someone in the body of Vaishravana, he will manifest in the body of Vaishravana and speak Dharma for them.

"If they must be saved by someone in the body of a minor king, he will manifest in the body of a minor king and speak Dharma for them.

"If they must be saved by someone in the body of an Elder, he will manifest in the body of an Elder and speak Dharma for them.

"If they must be saved by someone in the body of a layman, he will manifest in the body of a layman and speak Dharma for them.

"If they must be saved by someone in the body of a minister of state, he will manifest in the body of a minister of state and speak Dharma for them.

"If they must be saved by someone in the body of a Brahman, he will manifest in the body of a Brahman and speak Dharma for them.

"If they must be saved by someone in the body of a Bhikshu, Bhikshuni, Upasaka, or Upasika, he will manifest in the body of a Bhikshu, Bhikshuni, Upasaka, or Upasika and speak Dharma for them.

"If they must be saved by someone in the body of the wife of an Elder, of a layman, of a minister of state, or of a Brahman, he will manifest in a wife's body and speak Dharma for them.

"If they must be saved by someone in the body of a pure youth or a pure maiden, he will manifest in the body of a pure youth or pure maiden and speak Dharma for them.

"If they must be saved by someone in the body of a heavenly dragon, *yaksha*, *gandharva*, *asura*, *garuda*, *kinnara*, *mahoraga*, human, or nonhuman, and so forth, he will manifest in such a body and speak Dharma for them.

"If they must be saved by someone in the body of a Vajra-wielding spirit, he will manifest in the body of a Vajra-wielding spirit and speak Dharma for them.

"Inexhaustible Intention! Guanshiyin Bodhisattva has accomplished merit and virtue such as this and, in all manner of forms, roams throughout the land, saving and liberating living beings.

"Therefore you should all single-mindedly make offerings to Guanshiyin Bodhisattva. Guanshiyin Bodhisattva Mahasattva can, in the midst of fear, crisis, and hardship, bestow fearlessness. That is why in this Saha world all call him the "Bestower of Fearlessness."

Inexhaustible Intention Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, I shall now make an offering to Guanshiyin Bodhisattva." He then removed his necklace of

pearls, its value in the hundreds of thousands of ounces of gold, and offered it to the Bodhisattva, saying, "Humane One, accept this Dharma offering, this necklace of precious pearls."

Guanshiyin Bodhisattva refused to accept it.

Inexhaustible Intention Bodhisattva again said to Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, "Humane One, out of pity for us, accept this necklace."

The Buddha then told Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, "You should take pity on Inexhaustible Intention Bodhisattva and the fourfold assembly, as well as the gods, dragons, *yakshas*, *gandharvas*, *asuras*, *garudas*, *kinnaras*, *mahoragas*, humans, nonhumans, and so forth, and accept this necklace."

Then, out of pity for the fourfold assembly, the gods, dragons, humans, nonhumans, and so forth, Guanshiyin Bodhisattva accepted the necklace. He divided it into two parts: one part he offered to Shakyamuni Buddha and the other to the *stupa* of Many Jewels Buddha.

"Inexhaustible Intention, such is the self-mastery and spiritual power of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, who roams throughout the Saha world."

At that time, Inexhaustible Intention Bodhisattva used verses to ask this question:

*World Honored One, complete with wondrous marks,
I now ask again,
Why is this disciple of the Buddha Called Guanshiyin?*

*The Honored One of Perfect, Wondrous Marks,
With verses answered Inexhaustible Intention:
Listen to the practice of Guanyin,
Who skillfully responds in all places.*

*With vast vows, as deep as the sea,
Throughout inconceivable eons,
He has served many thousands of kotis of Buddhas,
And has made great, pure vows.*

*I shall now tell you in brief,
That for those who hear his name or see him,
And who are mindful of his name unceasingly,
He can extinguish the suffering of all realms of existence.*

*If someone is the victim of another's harmful intent,
And is pushed into a pit of fire,
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,*

*The pit of fire will turn into a pool.
If someone is being tossed about in the great sea,
And is surrounded by the dangers of dragons, fish, and ghosts,
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,
The waves will not drown him.*

*If someone is on the peak of Mount Sumeru,
And another person tries to push him off,
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,
He will stand firm as the sun in space.*

*If someone is pursued by evil people,
Who want to throw him off a Vajra Mountain,
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,
Not a single hair on his body will be harmed.*

*If someone is surrounded by vicious bandits,
Who threaten him with knives,
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,
The bandits will all give rise to compassion.*

*If someone is in trouble with the law,
And on the verge of being executed,
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,
The knives will break into pieces.*

*If someone is imprisoned, shackled, or chained,
Or if his hands and feet are in stocks,
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,
His bonds will open and he will be free.*

*If someone is about to be harmed,
By mantras, spells, or poison,
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,
The harm will all return to the sender.*

*If someone meets with evil rakshasas,
Poisonous dragons, or ghosts,
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,
They will then not dare to harm him.*

*If someone is surrounded by vicious beasts,
With fearsome fangs and claws,
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,
The beasts will quickly run far away.*

*Poisonous snakes and scorpions,
Have blazing lethal vapors,
But if one evokes the strength of Guanyin,
At the sound of one's voice, they will disperse.*

*Clouds of roaring thunder and lightning
May send down hail or great floods of rain,
But if one evokes the strength of Guanyin,
The clouds will immediately scatter.*

*Living beings are beset with hardships,
And oppressed by limitless sufferings.
The power of Guanyin's wondrous wisdom
Can rescue the world from suffering.*

*Complete with the power of spiritual penetrations,
Vastly cultivating wisdom and expedient means,
Going throughout countries in the ten directions,
He manifests everywhere in all places.*

*The various evil destinies,
Those of the hells, ghosts, and animals,
And the pain of birth, old age, sickness, and death
Are all gradually wiped away.*

*True Contemplator, Pure Contemplator,
Contemplator with Vast, Great Wisdom,
Compassionate Contemplator, Kind Contemplator,
May we constantly behold you with reverence!*

*Undefiled pure light,
The sun of wisdom that breaks through the darkness
Is able to quell calamities of wind and fire
As it shines on all worlds.*

*Compassionate substance: the thunder of precepts.
Kind intent: a wondrous great cloud.
He rains down sweet dew and Dharma rain,
Which extinguish the flames of affliction.*

*In the midst of contention, when faced with lawsuits,
Or when someone is terrified on the battlefield,
If he evokes the strength of Guanyin,
All his many enemies will scatter and leave.
Wondrous your sound, Contemplator of the World's Sounds
A pure sound, a sound like the sea tide,*

*A sound beyond all worldly sounds,
We shall always bear it in mind.*

*In thought after thought we have no doubt:
Guanshiyin is pure and sagely.
In times of suffering, agony, danger, and death,
He is our refuge and protector.*

*Complete with all merit and virtue,
His kind eyes watching living beings,
He is endowed with massive blessings, limitless as the sea.
Therefore we should reverently worship him.*

At that time the Bodhisattva Guardian of the Earth rose from his seat and said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, if there are those who hear this chapter of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, who learn about the self-mastery of his deeds and the power of his spiritual penetrations as shown in this Universal Door, you should know that the merit and virtue of such people will not be small."

When the Buddha had spoken the "Universal Door Chapter," eighty-four thousand living beings in the assembly all brought forth the resolve for *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

DHARANI

AT THAT TIME Medicine King Bodhisattva rose from his seat, uncovered his right shoulder, placed his palms together, faced the Buddha, and said, "World Honored One, if a good man or a good woman can receive and uphold the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, whether reading or reciting it with ease and understanding, or writing it out, what blessings will that person gain?"

The Buddha said to Medicine King, "What do you think? If a good man or a good woman were to make offerings to Buddhas equal in number to the grains of sand in eight million *kotis* of *nayutas* of Ganges Rivers, would the blessings he gained not be great?"

"Very great, World Honored One."

The Buddha said, "If a good man or a good woman can receive and uphold even a single four-line verse of this Sutra, read it, recite it, explain its meaning, and cultivate in accord with its teaching, his or her merit and virtue will be extremely great."

At that time Medicine King Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, I shall now give to the speakers of Dharma a *dharani* mantra for their protection."

He then spoke the mantra, saying:

An er. Man er. Mo mi. Mo mo mi. Zhi li. Zhe li di. She li. She li duo wei. Shan di. Mu di. Mu duo li. Suo li. E wei suo li. Sang li suo li. Cha yi. E cha yi. E chi ni. Shan di. She li. Tuo la ni. E lu qie pe suo. Bo zhe pi cha ni. Mi pi ti. E bian duo luo mi li ti. E tan duo bo li shu di. E jiu li. Mu jiu li. E luo li. Bo luo li. Suo jia cha. E san mo san li. Fo tuo pi ji li zhi di. Da mo bo li cha di. Seng qie nye jyu sha mi. Po she po she shu di. Man duo luo. Man duo luo cha ye duo. You lou duo. You lou duo qiao she liao. E cha luo. E cha ye duo ye. E po lu. E mo rao nuo duo ye.

"World Honored One, this *dharani*, this spiritual mantra, has been spoken by Buddhas equal in number to the sands of sixty-two *kotis* of Ganges Rivers. If anyone harms this Dharma Master, he will thereby have harmed these Buddhas."

Then Shakyamuni Buddha praised Medicine King Bodhisattva, saying, "Good indeed, good indeed, Medicine King, that you mercifully protect this Dharma Master by speaking this *dharani*, thereby greatly benefiting living beings."

At that time Courageous Giving Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, I too shall speak a *dharani* to protect those who read, recite, receive, and uphold the *Dharma Flower Sutra*. If this Dharma Master gains this *dharani*, no *yaksha*, *rakshasa*, *putana*, *kritya*, *kumbhanda*, or hungry ghost will be able to seek out his weakness and take advantage of him."

Then, in the presence of the Buddha, he spoke this mantra:

Cuo li. Mo he cuo li. Yu zhi. Mu zhi. E li. E luo po di. Nie li di. Nie li duo po di. Yi zhi ni. Wei zhi ni. Zhi zhi ni. Nie li chi ni. Nie li chi po di.

"World Honored One, this *dharani*, this spiritual mantra, has been spoken by Buddhas equal in number to the grains of sand in the Ganges River, all of whom rejoice in accord. If anyone harms this Dharma Master, he will thereby have harmed these Buddhas."

At that time the Heavenly King and World-Protector Vaishravana said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, I, too, out of compassion for living beings and in order to protect the Dharma Masters, shall speak this *dharani*."

He then spoke this mantra:

E li. Nuo li. Nou nuo lu. E nuo lu. Nuo li. Ju nuo li.

"World Honored One, by means of this spiritual mantra, I protect the Dharma Masters. I shall also personally protect the holders of this Sutra within an area of one hundred *yojanas* so that no harm or misfortune comes to them."

At that time the Heavenly King "Holder of the Country" was present in the assembly and reverently surrounded by a host of a thousand myriad *kotis* of *nayutas* of *gandharoas*. He went before the Buddha, placed his palms together, and spoke to the Buddha, saying,

"World Honored One, I too shall protect the upholders of the *Dharma Flower Sutra* with a *dharani*, a spiritual mantra."

He then spoke this mantra:

E qie mi. Qie mi. Ju li. Qian tuo li. Zhan tuo li. Mo deng qi. Chang qiu li. Fu lou suo ni. E di.

"World Honored One, this *dharani*, this spiritual mantra, has been spoken by forty-two *kotis* of Buddhas. If anyone harms this Dharma Master, he will thereby have harmed these Buddhas."

At that time there were *rakshasa* women. The first was named Lamba, the second was named Vilamba, the third was named Crooked Teeth, the fourth was named Flower Teeth, the fifth was named Black Teeth, the sixth was named Much Hair, the seventh was named Insatiable, the eighth was named Holder of Beads, the ninth was named Kunti, and the tenth was named Robber of the Essence and Energy of All Beings. These ten *rakshasa* women, along with the ghost mother and her children and their retainers, all went before the Buddha and spoke to him in unison, saying, "World Honored One, we, too, wish to protect those who read, recite, receive, and hold the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, and keep them from harm. Should anyone seek out the weaknesses of these Dharma Masters, he will not be able to take advantage of them."

Then, in the presence of the Buddha, they spoke this mantra:

Yi ti li. Yi ti min. Yi ti li. E ti li. Yi ti li. Ni li. Ni li. Ni li. Ni li. Ni li. Lou xi. Lou xi. Lou xi. Lou xi. Duo xi. Duo xi. Duo xi. Dou xi. Nou xi.

"Climb on top of our heads, but do not trouble this Dharma Master. No *yaksha*, *rakshasa*, hungry ghost, *putana*, *kritya*, *vetala*, *ghanta*, *omaraka*, *apasmaraka*, *yakshakritya*, human *kritya*; nor any fever lasting one day, or two days, or three days, or four days, or up to seven days; nor any constant fever; nor any shape of man, woman, young boy, or young girl shall trouble him, even in his dreams."

Then, in the presence of the Buddha, they spoke this verse:

*If anyone fails to comply with this mantra
Or tries to disturb one who speaks the Dharma,
His head shall break into seven pieces,
Like the branch of the arjaka tree.
Like the retribution for the offense of killing one's parents,
Or that of pressing oil,
Or cheating others with weights and measures,
Or Devadatta's offense in breaking up the Sangha- One who harms this
Dharma Master
Shall incur calamities such as these.*

Having spoken this verse, the *rakshasa* women said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we, too, shall personally protect those who receive, uphold, read, recite, and cultivate this Sutra, causing them to be peaceful and secure, free from all harm and illness, and able to neutralize all poisonous potions."

The Buddha told the *rakshasa* women, "Good indeed, good indeed! In protecting those who receive and uphold even the name of the Dharma flower, your blessings will be unlimited; how much more so for protecting those who receive and uphold it in full; who make offerings to the Sutra text of flowers, incense, beads, powdered incense, paste incense, burning incense, banners, canopies, and music; and who light various lamps—butter lamps, oil lamps, lamps of fragrant oil, lamps of *sumana* oil, lamps of *champak* flower oil, lamps of *varshika* flower oil, lamps of *utpala* flower oil, and lamps such as these, of a hundred thousand kinds. Kunti! You and your retinue should protect Dharma Masters such as these."

When this "*Dharani* Chapter" had been spoken, sixty-eight thousand people obtained the Patience with the Nonproduction of Dharmas.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THE PAST DEEDS OF KING WONDERFUL ADORNMENT

AT THAT TIME the Buddha told the great assembly, "Long ago, in the distant past, uncountable, boundless, inconceivable *asamkhyeyas* of eons ago, there was a Buddha by the name of Cloud Thunder Sound Constellation King Flower Wisdom, Tathagata, Arhat, Samyaksambuddha. The name of his country was Adorned by Light, and the name of his eon was Delight to Behold.

"Within the Dharma of that Buddha, there was a king by the name of Wonderful Adornment. The wife of the king was called Pure Virtue. She had two sons, the first named Pure Storehouse, the second named Pure Eye. These two sons had mighty spiritual powers, blessings, virtues, and wisdom. They had long cultivated the path practiced by the *Bodhisattvas dana-paramita, shila-paramita, kshanti-paramita, virya-paramita, dhyana-paramita, and prajna-paramita*; the *paramita* of skillful means; kindness, compassion, joy, and giving as well as the Thirty-seven Dharmas Aiding the Path. They had completely understood and penetrated all of these. They had also obtained the Bodhisattva's Pure Samadhi; the Samadhi of Sun and Stars; the Samadhi of Pure Light; the Samadhi of Pure Form; the Samadhi of Bright and Pure Illumination; the Samadhi of Extensive Adornment; and the Samadhi of the Storehouse of Great Awesome Virtue. All of these samadhis they had also completely penetrated."

At that time the Buddha, wishing to guide King Wonderful Adornment and also to be compassionate towards and mindful of living beings, spoke the *Dharma Flower Sutra*.

The two sons, Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye, went before their mother, placed their palms together and said, "We entreat you, Mother, to visit the Buddha Cloud Thunder Sound Constellation King Flower Wisdom. We should follow, draw near to, make

offerings to, and worship him. Why? The Buddha is speaking the *Dharma Flower Sutra* for all the hosts of gods and humans. We should listen to it and receive it!"

The mother said to her sons, "Your father believes in an externalist way and is deeply attached to the dharmas of Brahmanism. You should ask him if he wants to go along."

With their palms together, Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye said to their mother, "We are Dharma Princes, and yet we have been born into this house of deviant views!"

The mother replied, "Out of concern for your father, you should manifest spiritual transformations. If he sees them, his mind will be purified, and perhaps he will permit us to go to the Buddha."

Then, out of concern for their father, the two Sons rose up into Space to the height of seven *tala* trees and manifested various spiritual transformations.

In space they walked, stood, sat, and reclined. From the upper part of their bodies, they emitted water; and from the lower part, fire. From the lower part of their bodies, they emitted water; and from the upper part, fire. They manifested in huge bodies filling up all of space, and then they manifested as being small. From being small, they again manifested as being large. In space, they disappeared and then suddenly reappeared on the earth. They entered the earth as if it were water, and walked on the water as if it were earth.

Manifesting such spiritual transformations of all kinds, they led their father's mind to purity, belief, and understanding.

Seeing his sons' spiritual powers, the father rejoiced greatly and gained what he had never experienced before. Placing his palms together, he said to his sons, "Who is your Master? Whose disciples are you?"

The two sons said, "Your Majesty! He is the Buddha Cloud Thunder Sound Constellation King Flower Wisdom. He now sits on the Dharma seat beneath the seven treasures Bodhi tree proclaiming the *Dharma Flower Sutra* for all the hosts of gods and humans. He is our teacher; we are his disciples."

The father said to his sons, "I now also wish to meet your Master. Let us go there together!"

The two sons then came down from space, went to their mother, and with their palms joined, said, "Our father, the king, now believes and understands. He has been able to bring forth the resolve for *anuttarasam yaksambodhi*. For the sake of our father, we have carried out the Buddha's work. We pray, Mother, that you will give us permission to leave the home-life and cultivate the Way under that Buddha's guidance."

At that time the two sons, wishing to restate their intention, spoke verses to their mother, saying,

*We pray our mother will let us go
Leave the home-life and become Shramanas.
The Buddhas are extremely hard to meet,
And we will follow the Buddha in study.
As rare as the udumbara flower,
And harder to meet, is the Buddha;
It's difficult, too, to cast off difficulty.
So please let us leave the home-life!*

The mother then said, "I permit you to leave home. Why? Because the Buddhas are difficult to get to encounter."

The two sons then said to their parents, "Good indeed, Father and Mother! It is time, if you please, to go to the Buddha Cloud Thunder Sound Constellation King Flower Wisdom, to draw near to him and make offerings. Why is this? The Buddhas are as difficult to meet as the *udumbara* flower. It is also as difficult as it would be for a one-eyed tortoise to meet with a hole in a floating log. But our blessings from former lives are deep and thick, and so in this life we have encountered the Buddhadharma. Therefore, Father and Mother, hear us and allow us to leave the home-life. Why? The Buddhas are difficult to get to meet, and such a time is hard to encounter."

At that time eighty-four thousand women in the palace of King Wonderful Adornment all became capable of receiving and upholding the *Dharma Flower Sutra*.

The Bodhisattva Pure Eye had already long ago penetrated the Samadhi of the Dharma Flower. The Bodhisattva Pure Storehouse had already, for uncountable hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of eons, penetrated the Samadhi of Separation from All Evil Destinies, because he wished to cause all living beings to leave the evil destinies.

The king's wife obtained the Samadhi of the Buddha's Accumulation and was able to know all the secret treasures of the Buddhas.

The two sons, using the power of such expedients, skillfully taught their father, leading his mind to belief and understanding, and causing him to take delight in the Buddhadharma.

Then, King Wonderful Adornment, together with his assembled ministers and retinue; Queen Pure Virtue, together with her maidservants and retinue; and the king's two sons, together with forty-two thousand people, all went to the Buddha. Upon arrival, they bowed with their heads at the Buddha's feet, circumambulated him three times, and withdrew to one side.

That Buddha then spoke the Dharma for the king's instruction, bringing him benefit and delight, and the king rejoiced greatly.

Then King Wonderful Adornment and his wife removed their pearl necklaces, valued in the hundreds of thousands, and scattered them over the Buddha. In space, the necklaces transformed into a jeweled terrace with four pillars. In the center of the terrace was a large jeweled couch upon which were spread hundreds of thousands of myriads of heavenly garments. And on top of them was a Buddha seated in full lotus, emitting great light.

Then King Wonderful Adornment had this thought, "The Buddha's body is rare, upright, splendid, and distinguished."

The Buddha Cloud Thunder Sound Constellation King Flower Wisdom then told the four assemblies, "Do you see King Wonderful Adornment who stands before me with his palms joined? This king shall become a Bhikshu within my Dharma. Diligent in his cultivation of the Dharmas that Aid the Buddha Way, he shall become a Buddha by the name of Sala Tree King. His country shall be called Great Light. His eon shall be called Great Lofty King. The Buddha Sala Tree King shall have a host of uncountable Bodhisattvas as well as uncountable Hearers. His country will be flat and even. Thus shall be his merit and virtue."

The king then immediately conferred his country upon his younger brother, and together with his wife, his two children, and his retinue, left home within the Buddhadharma to cultivate the Way.

After leaving the home-life, for eighty-four thousand years the king was always diligent and vigorous in his cultivation of the *Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra*. Afterwards he obtained the Samadhi of the Adornment with All Pure Merit and Virtue.

He immediately rose up into space to the height of seven *tala* trees and said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, my two sons have already done the Buddha's work. With spiritual penetrations and transformations, they have turned me away from deviant thought and caused me to abide securely within the Buddhadharma and to meet with the World Honored One. These two sons are my Good and Wise Advisors. Wishing to arouse in me the good roots planted in former lives and to benefit me, they came to be born in my household."

At that time the Buddha Cloud Thunder Sound Constellation King Flower Wisdom told King Wonderful Adornment, "So it is, so it is, just as you say. If good men or good women have planted good roots, in life after life they may gain a Good and Wise Advisor. The Good and Wise Advisor can do the Buddha's work, instruct, benefit, and delight them, and cause them to enter *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*.

"Great King, you should know that a Good and Wise Advisor is a great causal condition, for he teaches and guides people, and causes them to see the Buddha and to bring forth the resolve for *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*.

"Great King, do you see these two children? In the past, these two children made offerings to Buddhas equal in number to the grains of sand in sixty-five hundred thousand myriads of *kotis* of *nayutas* of Ganges Rivers, drawing near them with reverence. In the presence of those Buddhas, they received and upheld the *Dharma Flower Sutra*. Pitying living beings with deviant views, they led them to abide in proper views.

King Wonderful Adornment then came down from space and said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the Thus Come One is extremely rare. By means of his merit and virtue and wisdom, the flesh cowl atop his head dazzles brightly. His eyes are long and broad, violet in color. The hair-mark light between his eyebrows is as white as the glistening moon. His teeth are white, even, and always shining. His lips are a fine red color like the *bimba* fruit."

Having thus praised the Buddha for his uncountable hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of meritorious virtues, King Wonderful Adornment then, in the presence of the Thus Come One, single-mindedly placed his palms together and further said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the Thus Come One's Dharma is unique, perfect in the accomplishment of inconceivable, subtle, and wonderful merit and virtue. His teachings on the practice of morality lead to security, joy, and goodness. From this day forward, I shall never again follow the course of my own mind. I will never give rise to deviant views, arrogance, anger, or any other evil thoughts."

Having said that, he bowed to the Buddha and left.

The Buddha told the great assembly, "What do you think? Could King Wonderful Adornment have been anyone else? He was just the present Bodhisattva Flower Virtue. His wife, Queen Pure Virtue, was just the Bodhisattva Mark of Shining Adornment now in the presence of the Buddha, who, out of pity for King Wonderful Adornment and his retinue, was born among them.

"The two sons are the present Bodhisattva Medicine King and Bodhisattva Medicine Superior. The Bodhisattva Medicine King and the Bodhisattva Medicine Superior have accomplished such great merit and virtue as this. In the presence of uncountable hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of Buddhas, they have already amassed the roots of virtue and accomplished inconceivable wholesome merit and virtue.

"If a person knows the names of these two Bodhisattvas, all the world with its population of gods and humans should do obeisance to him."

When the Buddha spoke this chapter, "The Past Deeds of King Wonderful Adornment," eighty-four thousand people were removed from the dust and separated from defilement. They obtained the Purity of the Dharma Eye with respect to all dharmas.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF UNIVERSAL WORTHY BODHISATTVA

AT THAT TIME Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, renowned for his comfort, spiritual powers, and awesome virtue, came from the east together with uncountable, boundless, incalculable great Bodhisattvas. The countries they passed through quaked, and jeweled lotuses rained down while uncountable hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of kinds of music played.

He was also accompanied by and surrounded by a great host of countless gods, dragons, *yakshas*, *gandharvas*, *asuras*, *garudas*, *kinnaras*, *mahoragas*, humans, nonhumans, and so forth. Each was manifesting the power of awesome virtue and spiritual penetrations.

Arriving at Mount Gridhrakuta in the Saha world, they bowed in obeisance to Shakyamuni Buddha, circumambulated him seven times to the right and said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, in the country of the Buddha Superior King of Jeweled Awesome Virtue, I heard from afar that in the Saha world, the *Dharma Flower Sutra* was being spoken. I have come with uncountable, boundless hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of Bodhisattvas to hear and receive it. I only pray that the World Honored One will speak it. After the passing of the Thus Come One, how is a good man or a good woman to obtain the *Dharma Flower Sutra*?"

The Buddha told Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, "If a good man or a good woman accomplishes the Four Dharmas, he will attain the *Dharma Flower Sutra* after the passing of the Thus Come One. First, he is the object of the Buddha's mindfulness and protection. Second, he amasses the roots of virtue. Third, he enters the collection of proper concentrations. Fourth, he brings forth the mind to rescue all living beings.

"If a good man or a good woman in this way accomplishes these Four Dharmas, he is certain to gain this Sutra after the passing of the Thus Come One."

Universal Worthy Bodhisattva then said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, in the last five hundred years, in the turbid, evil world, if there are those who receive and uphold this Sutra, I shall protect them, keep them from harm, and cause them to be peaceful and secure. No being will be able to take advantage of them, be it a demon, a demon son, a demon daughter, a demon subject, or one possessed by a demon, a *yaksha*, *rakshasa*, *kumbhanda*, *pishacha*, *kritya*, *putana*, *vetala*, or any tormentor of human beings none shall get at them.

"If there is a person reading or reciting this Sutra, whether walking or standing, I will at that time mount my royal white elephant with six tusks and together with a host of Great Bodhisattvas go to that place, manifest my body, make offerings, protect him, and comfort his mind, and also make offerings to the *Dharma Flower Sutra*.

"Should a person be sitting and pondering over this Sutra, I will at that time again mount my royal white elephant and manifest before him. If he should forget a line or a verse of the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, I will teach it to him, and read and recite it with him until he becomes fluent. Upon seeing me, the one who receives, upholds, reads, and recites the *Dharma Flower Sutra* will rejoice greatly and increase his vigor. Having seen me, he will immediately obtain samadhis and *dharanis* a *dharani* by the name of Revolution, a *dharani* of a hundred thousand myriad *kotis* of revolutions, and a *dharani* of the skill-in-means of Dharma sounds. He shall obtain *dharanis* such as these.

"World Honored One, if in the last five hundred years, in the turbid evil world, there is a Bhikshu, Bhikshuni, Upasaka, or Upasika, who seeks, upholds, reads, recites, writes out, or wishes to cultivate the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, he or she should be single-minded and vigorous for twenty-one days. At the end of twenty-one days I will mount my white elephant with six tusks, and surrounded by uncountable Bodhisattvas, I will appear before that person in a body all living beings delight in seeing, and speak the Dharma for him, instructing, benefiting, and delighting him. I shall further give him a *dharani* mantra. Once he obtains the *dharani* mantra, no nonhuman will be able to hurt him, nor will he be confused by women. I will also personally protect this person forever. I only pray the World Honored One will allow me to speak this *dharani* mantra."

Then, in the presence of the Buddha, he spoke this mantra, saying:

E tan di. Tan tuo po di. Tan tuo po di. Tan tuo jiu she li. Tan tuo xiu tuo li. Xiu tuo li. Xiu tuo luo po di. Fo tuo bo shan mi. Sa pe tuo luo ni e po duo ni. Sa po po sa e po duo ni. Xiu e po duo ni. Seng qie po li cha ni.

Seng qie nie qie tuo ni. E seng chi. Seng qie po qie di. Di li e duo seng qie duo liao. E luo di po luo di. Sa po seng qie di san mo di qie ian di. Sa pe da mo xiu bo li cha di. Sa pe sa tuo lou tuo qiao she liao e na qie di. Xin e pi ji li di di.

"World Honored One, if there is a Bodhisattva who hears this *dharani*, you should know that it is through the power of the spiritual penetrations of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva. If the *Dharma Flower Sutra* is circulating through Jambudvīpa, and if a person receives and upholds it, he should bring forth this thought, 'This is all through the power of the awesome spirit of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva.'

"If a person receives, upholds, reads, and recites it, properly recollects it, explains its doctrines, and cultivates according to its teachings, you should know that he is practicing the conduct of Universal Worthy. He has planted deep good roots in the presence of boundless, uncountable Buddhas. His head has been rubbed by the hands of the Thus Come Ones.

"If a person merely writes out the Sutra, at the end of his life, he will be born in the Trayastriṃśa Heaven. At that time eighty-four thousand heavenly women will welcome him with all kinds of music. He shall immediately don a cap made of seven treasures and enjoy himself among the goddesses. How much the more will this be the case for one

who receives, upholds, reads, and recites it, properly recollects it, explains its doctrines, and cultivates according to its teachings! If a person receives, upholds, reads, recites, and explains its doctrines, at the end of his life a thousand Buddhas will extend their hands toward him, so that he need not fear falling into the evil destinies. He will immediately be born in the Tushita Heaven in the presence of Maitreya Bodhisattva. Maitreya Bodhisattva has thirty-two marks and is surrounded by a host of great Bodhisattvas and a retinue of hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of goddesses. Being born therein, he shall obtain merit and virtue and benefits such as these.

"Therefore, one with wisdom should single-mindedly write it out himself, employ others to write it out, receive, uphold, read, recite, and properly recollect it and cultivate in accord with its teachings.

"World Honored One, I now protect this Sutra with my spiritual powers. After the passing of the Thus Come One, I shall propagate it widely in Jambudvīpa, so that it will never be cut off."

At that time Shakyamuni Buddha praised him, saying, "Good indeed, good indeed, Universal Worthy, that you can protect and aid this Sutra and bestow happiness and benefit on many living beings. You have already accomplished inconceivable merit and virtue, and deep and great compassion. From the distant past you have brought forth the resolve for *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* and have been able to make this vow to protect this Sutra with spiritual penetrations. I shall now use the power of spiritual penetrations to protect those who can receive and uphold the name of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva.

"Universal Worthy, if a person can receive and uphold, read, recite, properly recollect, cultivate, and write out the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, you should know that this person thereby sees Shakyamuni Buddha. It is as if he had heard this Sutra from the Buddha's mouth. You should know that this person has made offerings to Shakyamuni Buddha. You should know that the Buddha has praised this person, saying, 'Good indeed!'

"You should know that this person's head has been rubbed by Shakyamuni Buddha's hand, and that he has been covered by Shakyamuni Buddha's robe.

"A person such as this will never again be attached to worldly pleasures. He will never again be fond of the texts or manuscripts of externalist ways, nor will he enjoy drawing near such people or other evil people, be they butchers; keepers of pigs, sheep, fowl, or dogs; hunters; or panders.

"This person's mind will be straightforward and his memory proper. He will have the power of blessings and virtue. This person will not be tormented by the three poisons, nor will he again be tormented by jealousy, arrogance, deviant pride, or overweening pride. This person will have few desires and will know contentment. He will be able to cultivate the conduct of Universal Worthy.

"Universal Worthy, if after the passing of the Thus Come One, in the last five hundred years, you see a person who can receive, uphold, read, and recite the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, you should think, 'Before long, this person will go to the Way-place and destroy the demon hordes. He will attain *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*, turn the Dharma-wheel, beat upon the Dharma drum, blow the Dharma conch, let fall the Dharma rain, and soon sit on the Lion Dharma throne among the great hosts of gods and humans.

"Universal Worthy, if in the later age, there is a person who can receive, uphold, read, or recite this Sutra, he will never again be greedy for clothing, bedding, food, and drink, or any necessities of life. His vows will not be in vain, and in his present life he shall obtain the reward of blessings.

"If one ridicules and slanders this person, saying, 'You're insane! What you are doing is useless and will never amount to anything,' his retribution will be such that in life after life he will have no eyes.

"If a person makes offerings and gives praise, then in his present life he will obtain the fruits of his reward.

"If, again, one sees a person receiving and upholding this Sutra and then speaks of his faults or evils, be they true or untrue, in his present life he will contract leprosy.

"If one ridicules him and laughs, then in life after life his teeth will be sparse and missing, his lips ugly, his nose flat, his hands and feet contorted, his eyes pointed and askew, his body stinking and filthy. He will be covered with hideous sores, pus, and blood. His belly will be full of water, or he will be short of breath. He will be plagued with all manner of nasty and grave illnesses.

"Therefore, Universal Worthy, if one sees a person who receives and upholds this Sutra, one should welcome him from afar and revere him as one would the Buddha."

When this chapter, "The Encouragement of Universal Worthy," had been spoken, uncountable, boundless numbers of Bodhisattvas, as many as the Ganges sands, obtained the *dharani* of a hundred thousand myriad *kotis* of revolutions. Bodhisattvas equal in number to the motes of dust in the three thousand great thousand worlds perfected the path of Universal Worthy.

When the Buddha had spoken this Sutra, Universal Worthy and all the other Bodhisattvas, Shariputra and all the Hearers, as well as the entire great assembly of gods, dragons, humans, nonhumans, and so forth, all greatly rejoiced, received and upheld the Buddha's words, made obeisance, and withdrew.